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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

INVENTING PARADISE

BY

ALAN RICHARDS

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta
FALL 1993

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled INVENTING PARADISE submitted by ALAN RICHARDS in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

B. L. Almon

.....

B.L. Almon (supervisor)

.....

K. Gunnars

.....

P.A. Robberecht

Date: 25 August 1993

This sequence of poems is dedicated to Loraine Anderson, and to Sigurd Delblanc and Steve Willey, who put up with me and gave me their love and their friendship in my voyages with Christopher.

ABSTRACT

The years 1992-2004 mark the quincentennial of Christopher Columbus' voyages to the New World. Through a variety of forms and narratives, the poem seeks to explore and re-invent the meaning of the historical figure of Columbus and of his arrival.

One narrative, addressing Columbus in the second person, identifies specific moments in his voyages and links them with the poet's own life and with contemporary events. A second narrative calls upon a figure from Cree stories, Weesageechak, and his/her quest to re-create the world as a means of asking what it takes to re-make a new world order. A third narrative presents an imaginary encounter with a Taino woman kidnapped by Columbus on his first journey while a fourth is created from elements of a historical move, in the eighteenth-century, of a group of Iroquois from Montreal to Alberta.

These narratives develop through fragments, each fragment a poem or group of small poems, juxtaposed with each other and with sets of "postcards" which are quotations from a variety of historical and contemporary texts. A set of notes, identifying sources and offering background information and comments on individual poems is followed by an annotated bibliography.

PREFACE

In the West Edmonton Mall, a replica of the *Santa María* collects barnacles and tourists. I do not know how exact a replica it is, but it is anchored with the sponsorship of Kodak and carries banners advertising sales in the mall stores. In New York, sailors from another replica of Columbus' flagship wander the streets. Their ship was built to celebrate the quincentenary of Columbus's first voyage to the New World. It made it to New York but Spain's money for the project ran out before it could continue down to the Caribbean, an event that Columbus, who had had to fight for his own financial backing, might have understood. For now, the skeleton crew left to look after the ship take in what sights they can with what pay they have in their pockets.

Perhaps a long poem, focusing on the Italian-born, Spanish-employed, Discoverer-Invader, and written by a student of English at the University of Alberta, is just as incongruous. It may be possible, however, to adjust the light and see these events differently. The marooning of the *Santa María* in New York parodies the quincentennial, the hyped-up plans for celebrations which seemed to run out of wind, or money, and failed to answer the protesters. A replica anchored in a mall, like the

stereotypical "Indian brave" outside a western-wear shop in the same mall, reflects the rewriting of historical events and the people involved, not by poets or literary critics, but by contemporary consumer-capitalism and its promises of instant pieces of paradise (will that be cash or on your Visa?). Writing *Inventing Paradise* has been for me a voyage of exploration and encounter, of imagining into words a number of disparate and even incongruous ("Madonna comes with you, Christopher") elements. I have used the occasion of the quincentennial to make poetry and to ask about how we remake our cultural meanings and our (anti)heroes.

Columbus made five voyages to the New World. The first (1492-3) held out for him the most promise for his own success and for a source of new wealth for Europe. The second (1493-1496) began with high hopes for the colonization of the New World (17 ships and 1200 crew) and was marked by failures and by increasing violence against the indigenous peoples. During his third voyage (1498-1500), Columbus was jailed by the governor of Hispaniola and sent to Spain in chains. On the fourth voyage (1502-4), after difficult explorations along the coast of Central America, he was marooned for over a year on Jamaica. Finally, in 1541, Columbus' remains were shipped to Hispaniola; whether they were eventually returned to Seville or remain in Santo Domingo is a matter of debate.

Columbus himself died in relative obscurity but his voyages enabled Spain to establish a colonial beach-head on the Caribbean islands. From the Antilles, the conquistadors staged their invasion of the American continents which Columbus had touched without understanding. Meanwhile, indigenous cultures were decimated. The quincentennial, as an occasion for protest, also revealed the strength of an aboriginal renaissance throughout the Americas.

Columbus' five voyages and a Cree creation story inform the principal structure of this project. In five sections, the poem constitutes my response to the cultural figure of Columbus while the poem is driven forward as I listen to the Native "diver myth." The matter of poetry has become the clay for which I dive as I write and with which I want to remake the world as I encounter it, and am encountered by it.

Columbus had his voyages; in this poem I make three, interwoven, journeys of my own. Writing this poem has been a way of reading, poetically, politically and ethically, a cultural (anti)hero. I have also been looking for a sense of place from which to read and to write as a poet today. And for a better understanding of how to make poetry. And why.

The place of politics

Who was Columbus? Does the question warrant

exploration? If Christopher Columbus had not come to the Americas, perhaps other Europeans would have anyway. Columbus, then, may not have been so much an agent of history as one of its accidents. Even so, Columbus has become a foundational myth shaping and being shaped by Western culture.

Through those words of that survive from the historical Columbus, through a variety of engraved or painted portraits, and through a number of contemporary value-judgements, I have been faced with the would-be Christ-bearer's arrogance and follies, with his dogged-determination, great disappointments, exhaustion, and his homesickness for Andalusia, by the impact of what he did on the indigenous cultures of the Americas and by the subversion of his enteprise by a Spanish state bent on imperial dreams. Columbus is a complex cultural figure created by fragmentary and contradictory historical documents and by contemporary and equally contradictory perceptions of those documents and the events they narrate.

Columbus himself cannot be held accountable for the terrors of European colonization yet the alienation between Europeans and the aboriginal peoples was there, in germ, that moment he stepped ashore and, before even meeting the people living there, took possession of the land in the name of Christ and for Spain. In a poem like "Hispaniola 1495" I find the nature of much of the

European encounter with Native peoples already anticipated while "A Columbus A B (Oh! Sh...!) & C Book" catalogues what Canadian and American societies have made of Columbus. Both issues shape a poem like "Skinheads Kick Aztecs."

In the United States, Columbus has long been an official hero. Columbus Day is a public holiday, although the date is ironic for October 12 by Christopher's Julian calendar is October 21 by Gregorian and modern reckoning. Columbus, like Boone and Crockett, has been regarded as a hero of the frontier, and thus of Western progress; the space shuttle, after all, bears his name, feminized in the nautical tradition. But is Columbus a hero in Canada, except on American tv received by satellite dishes? Are not our official heroes people like Cartier and MacKenzie?

While Americans celebrated and protested the arrival of Columbus, Canadians, preoccupied with economic and constitutional debates, barely managed to celebrate our 125th anniversary with the issuing of new coins and the unveiling of a new statue of Queen Elizabeth II. Does this mean that Columbus has no significance in Canada, apart from a major river which we share with the United States? Perhaps. And yet, the horses which arrived in the prairies, and which revolutionized life for the Indian nations living there, migrated north from the first stock taken off the ships of Spanish colonizers;

they brought with them the invisible hand of Columbus. Only after him could the whole of this continent, from sea to sea to shining sea, and artificially divided by the 49th parallel, be re-invented as a new and found land.

Some Canadians might argue that the experiences of Native peoples in this country have been less destructive than elsewhere in the Americas; such a debate is irrelevant for the moment Columbus kissed the ground of Guanahaní and took possession of his title as Viceroy of the Indies was the moment it was decided that Ottawa would never create a Department of European Affairs. How do we as Canadians, then, imagine Columbus? I have, therefore, juxtaposed my readings of this historical and cultural figures with my readings of Canadian poets and of contemporary events such as the confrontation at Oka in 1990 and a protest in Edmonton against the Knights of Columbus' parade.

Not only as a Canadian, but how, as a western Canadian, can I imagine this cultural figure? Columbus himself largely failed in his attempts to bring back gold and other wealth from the New World, but those who succeeded him from Spain and other European nations fared much better. The experience of the hinterland as a place in which resources are to be exploited in the interests of the metropolis, and as a market for the finished products (manufactured goods, political decisions, and

cultural commodities) of that centre, is an experience well understood in the west. In one sense, Columbus is merely the first "Easterner." So, from beginning to end in this poem, I have wanted to encounter Columbus while standing on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. His voyages are paralleled by the story of Iroquois Louis and his family who sought, long before Pierre Trudeau's National Energy Policy, to leave the "Eastern bastards in the dark" and find a paradise in the foothills of the Rockies. And the myth of the Discoverer is held together with a story of creation first told by one of the major aboriginal nations of this area.

Where is the place of (under)standing?

The figure of Columbus has been part of my search for a more personal sense of place. If it is true that he was born in 1451, then I was born in the quincentennial of his birth and his ghost has been pursuing me ever since. Like him, I began sailing at an early age. In my study I have a certificate dated September 6, 1951 (when I was six months old) declaring that King Neptune had given me the "Freedom of the Seas." It is a souvenir of the *mardi-gras* kind of festivities that used to take place on ocean-going passenger ships to mark the crossing of the Equator. The certificate also announces that Neptune charged all denizens of the deep not to molest me, should I have the misfortune to fall

overboard; what seems to be an allergic reaction to eating fish may be, in my case, simply a reciprocal obligation.

Unlike the Admiral, however, my sailing days came to end when I was about the age that his were beginning. I first heard about him as a British school-boy, sweltering in my heavy short-pants, shirt and school tie, in central Africa. I remember scenes from a movie shown in school in which Columbus' little ship ducked and tossed through a storm threatening its destruction. My own sea voyages ended when a ship of the Cunard line, ironically named the *Saxonia*, docked in Montreal in 1959.

When I was in Grade 5 and 6, attending a white, anglophone Protestant school in the predominantly francophone and Roman Catholic community of St. Bruno, Québec, I was given my first introduction to Canadian history. Here narratives about Cartier, Champlain, Radisson, Groseilliers, and Brébeuf (about Marie de l'Incarnation I was not to hear of for years) were balanced by that of Columbus and those of Ericksson, Cabot, MacKenzie and Thompson. These stories were repeated in greater detail in my history lessons in high school. There I could look through the windows and see the farm lands of Pickering although, just beyond my horizon, these lands were already being discovered by a nuclear power station and by developers from Toronto.

It was in studying at the University of Calgary, and

then at St. Andrew's Theological College in Saskatoon, that I encountered a different sense of Canadian history, and, therefore, of Canadian identity. Louis Riel and Emily Murphy, the Winnipeg Strike and farm protest movements, the movement for church union among Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists (often resisted "down East"), and poets such as Garry Geddes, Robert Kroetsch, Dorothy Livesay, Eli Mandel, Anne Szumigalski, and Phyllis Webb are part of a landscape that continues to re-invent my imagination. As are my experiences as a United Church minister among people in rural and urban communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the B.C. interior.

What can bring these disparate experiences together? What emerges for me from this second journey are two lenses through which to see, and be seen by, the world. One is a recognition that what Adam and Eve and other discoverers call the Promised Land is already home to those living there. The second is an awareness that the invention of Paradise by those who have been exiled from it requires action to retake the tree of life. The political influence of Native voices in the recent years of constitutional debate, for example. Or the efforts of this former hawker of the Word to re-invent his approach to words.

So it happened that, in the spring of 1991, I was taking a course in children's literature with Prof. Jon

Stott and encountered Weesageechak in a story we were reading. And I remembered a story I had read once before in which the Trickster played a role in the (re-)creation of this corner of the world, and perhaps of the whole world. That afternoon, for some reason, I chose to walk home via the Groat Street Bridge rather than take my usual route across the High Level. Like a kid out of school, I wandered through Emily Murphy Park, looking at this and that, and found a place where I could come close to the river, running high, strong and brown with spring. There was the smell of poplars and a muskrat, struggling against the current. Although I did not recognize it at the time, I had found my sense of place. Or, at least, a place from which to begin this poem.

Some poetics in place

When I first began thinking about the quincentennial (then, in 1991, just around the corner), I wrote a few small poems, two of which ("Hispaniola 1495," "These Are Pictures of You, Christopher) have been reworked and included here. But I soon found these were only reconnaissance forays into issues and themes requiring a long poem if I wanted to explore them further. What was needed was something that would dare to move towards the epic and yet hold together documentary and lyrical elements. Fortunately, as both Kamboureli's study and Livesay's essay of 1969 (cf. Works Cited) showed me,

Canadians have been making such poetry for a long time. Atwood's and Ondaatje's re-invention of historical figures suggested possible ways of approaching Columbus. Their use of disparate forms (lyrics and painting in Atwood's case; lyrics, prose poems and photographs in Ondaatje's) invited me, also, to play with different forms in order to hold together lyric and politics, documentary and the personal.

So, for example, "About Muskrat" uses puns and allusions in a prose poem. "Hispaniola 1495," also using word play, moves without prose sentences and towards the lyric. On the other hand, "Itiba's Last Day" is a lyric in defined stanzas that depends on the creation of rhythm through sounds and stresses, and on this rhythm breaking down. In some of the pieces, the length of the lines and where they break is significant. Others depend on a prose form, while in yet others the lines are arranged for the express purpose of creating a visual illusion of framed photographs in an album.

One way to hold divergent meanings together, and create new ones, is through the use of allusion. In this poem there are overt and covert allusions to the work of other poets but also to historical events and to elements of contemporary culture. At one level, I hope the pieces work in spite of these allusions, that they are in this sense unnecessary; one of my memories of first year English was the frustration of *needing* to read the Norton

footnotes if I was to make any sense of *The Wasteland*.

Yet, for those who are prepared to play with this poem, the allusions are (for the most part) deliberate. It seems to me that this process, which includes intertexuality, allows separate elements that have not before been related now to be held together. It becomes a form of dialogue, during the course of which each element is re-read and re-written. It becomes possible, I hope, to see Madonna, a contemporary cultural icon, and Columbus, the historical figure, in new ways when they are held together in the same line. Similarly, holding up one of Duncan Campbell Scott's poems against the events in Oka invites the reader, I hope, to see the limitations of my poem even while I invite a re-reading of Scott and of the relationship between his poetry and his politics.

Intertextuality, after all, is not a new device. My familiarity with it begins with my readings, as a child and as a theological student, of the Bible. Paul's unfootnoted quotations from early church hymns, for example, or Matthew's (sometimes loose) quotations which he expected his audience to recognize from the Hebrew prophets, were ways of creating a dialogue between the past and the present, between received traditions and the inventions of new meanings. In my quest for a Canadian response to Columbus, I have chosen to draw particularly on Canadian poets and events. At the same time, in the

"Postcards," I have drawn from a variety of historical and contemporary texts and set them up in a space where, I hope, they and my own poems encounter and re-write each other.

One of the texts that informs this poem is an English translation of a Cree story. I am aware there is a debate surrounding the issue of appropriation. Is is possible, for example, for a white, male writer to use aboriginal stories or present female characters without contributing further to the exploitation and oppression of women or Native people in a white, male-dominated society? At the same time, I am also aware that the so-called Discoverer, the one who opened the doors for the holocaust that was the conquest of the New World, was named Christopher, or "Christ-Bearer." I will not dump the blame for this holocaust entirely on the Christian community; in "from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*," the first and second dives, I acknowledge both Fray Antón's sermon in which he castigated the Spanish colonial administration (including Columbus' son and successor, Don Diego) for its treatment of Native peoples, and the Act of Apology by the United Church of Canada in 1986. Yet, the Christian community is culpable, largely because, as the Apology expressed, it failed to listen, and allow itself to be encountered by, the stories and spirituality of the aboriginal peoples. I choose then, to hold in tension the Cree story and material from Taino

myth with the Christ-Bearer. In this tension, I hope to find a way of reading the meaning of the encounter between Europeans and Native peoples, and of its consequences. Perhaps, also, this tension will permit me, as a poet and as a contemporary Canadian, to contribute to the writing of a future shape the hope inherent in creation stories.

The element of intertextuality concludes in the Notes which are appended at the end of the poem. This poem is being presented as an M.A. thesis, but my notes are intended to do more than identify sources or qualify my arguments. Admittedly, with the amount of historical and political matter I have drawn upon to shape these poems, it may be useful or interesting to the reader, as well as academically responsible, to acknowledge my sources and comment on some of the details. Such a function, however, serves to "fix" a text by giving a precise source or date, or offering authoritative background information. Rather than "fix" the text of my poems, I hope the notes will open up this work in ways that invite readers to see that new readings of the Columbus myth are possible and to ask about their own readings.

I am writing from the banks of a river; the meaning of the encounters with Columbus, and the meanings of this poem about those encounters, flow around me like the water around that muskrat. They are at once transitory

and the constant element in which we swim. The poem is a means of re-inventing historical and contemporary events. The notes, with their own word play, ironic and irreverent comments and, in one case at least, a blatantly fictitious reference, are means of re-inventing pieces of the poem. And by refusing a Norton Anthology-like certainty to these notes, I invite readers to continue the process, using my poem as a place in which to do their own swimming.

*

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I am grateful to the Department of English for awarding me the James Patrick Folinsbee prizes in 1991 and 1992 and for encouraging me, in this way, to continue to write.

I am also grateful to my co-students and teachers in creative writing classes, both in poetry and in fiction, here at the University of Alberta through 1990-93. From the courage, risks, failures, success, and good humour that were part of these classes, and from our criticism about each other's work have come some of the ideas for this project. In these conversations I learned much that I applied to the actual process of writing *Inventing Paradise*.

Especially I want to thank Bert Almon, my supervisor, for his seemingly inexhaustible patience with this project, his repeated encouragement, and his lightly-pencilled criticisms and suggestions for change. Mostly, I thank him for showing me a space where talking about poets and poetry and our own writing is as natural as breathing.

I hope that *Inventing Paradise* goes some way towards repaying the daily larcenies (Klein, *Portrait of the Poet as Landscape*) my lungs have committed during my studies here.

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*

INVENTING

PARADISE

1ST
VOYAGE:

EMBARKATIONS

Weep for me whoever has charity, truth and justice!
--Christopher, Jamaica 1503

From the wide beaches to exciting cabarets and casinos, Nassau is really like finding a piece of Paradise. By day, the streets of Nassau are busy with excitement. Shoppers can find everything from jewellery and perfumes to the colorful native crafts.
--"Ports of Call," Canadian Holidays, 1992

These islands are all very green and fertile and subject to gentle breezes. They may contain many things of which I do not know because I did not care to land and explore them, being anxious to find gold.... And I saw on this island cotton cloths made like shawls. The people are more friendly and the women wear a small piece of cotton in front which just hides their private parts.
--Christopher, 15 & 16 Oct/92

✡ P O S T C A R D S ✡

No more Columbus Day.
No more genocide.
--Protestor,
Edmonton, 12 Oct/92

Columbus set off across the terrestrial ocean, and now we're standing on the shores of the cosmic ocean, searching for intelligent life out there.
--Michael Klein, NASA Jet Propulsion Lab, 11 Oct/1992

How to use this book: *This book traces, step by step, Columbus' fifth voyage through North America. On each page, where relevant, you may find a map which shows you the position of his ships at that particular point in the voyage. Using these maps you can trace for yourself the uncompleted journey of Columbus on the large fold-out map at the end of the book (use the grid lines and references to make this easier) and see his posthistoric voyage take shape before you.*

The Invasion of Song

So how do we sing, after
all? Between seas and armed
with heroes, how can we sing
in old worlds made new
and old again in our alien
residences and our bravura?

Madonna comes with you, Christopher
and half a thousand years become
the day before yesterday, a movie
we watch in our late nights.

By the North Saskatchewan a failing sun
splashes orange pop and lime soda on the trees,
setting cherry fire to mountain ash
and waiting for a voice

There is no song

:there is
a leaf pattering through branches

a muskrat, dazed and exhausted, trying again to find
earth now that it's not raining

and wind, always wind, casting the morning
grass to burn in waves of a prairie sea.

For in the end it is the sea always the sea only
the sea running high running smooth as a river
concealing currents of death
breaking life
open in its waves breaking

and we are sailors,
searching the signs
for paradise.

The Suitcase as Tour Guide: A Discovered Poem

Come cruise the Caribbean.

Presenting Holland America's Caribbean in 1992:

"Softly tinted light bathes the air,
and cares float away on dancing turquoise waters.
This is a magical place of wonder and daydreams,
of alluring rhythms and spice.
A place where mystery and indulgence beckon."

Come cruise the Caribbean.

From Columbus, on Jamaica, in 1503:

"For nine days I was lost with no hope of life. Eyes
never saw the sea so rough, so ugly
or so seething with foam.
The wind did not allow
us to go ahead or give us a chance of running,
nor did it allow us to shelter
under any headland.
There I was held
in those seas turned to blood, boiling
like a cauldron on a mighty fire.
All this time water
fell increasingly from the sky. One cannot say
that it rained, for it was like a repetition
of the deluge.
The crews were now so broken
that they longed for death."

Come cruise the Caribbean.

These Are My Ports of Call, Christopher

Her voice irritating, a
poet dives like Muskrat into our
murky history, surfacing with a
journal's fictions from which she
sings a bitter immigrant into a
surviving hero: they deface
my garrison.

In a prairie town I have coffee in a Chinese café adorned with your name, your portrait and orange walls. Davey Crockett's doggerel accompanies you from Kansas to where I play with a pop-up Santa Maria in the heart of an Other's darkness. A Swede illustrates your journeys and teaches me the name of Guanahaní while a Latin professor colours his translation of your picture. I'm learning to navigate.

In the brown stained earth
in the silenced thirties, a family
falls from the Welsh hinterland to
an English city where the boy takes
up boxing to protect a green music
in his speaking from the hammerings
of English. He becomes my father.

Another singer, coming
through the slaughter of the sea
burning with blood behind him,
shoots the American Kid all over
again. How to frame
an anti-hero?

In the cherry-red earth
of the forties, two Paris teenagers
dream, every thousand-year day at a time, of
a new occupation. (Climbing the Alps, perhaps,
with girl-friends and accented men, or teaching
children the verbs of resistance.) One
becomes my mother; the other is
my aunt in Kansas.

Always the wind, casting day and grass
in waves where stones from yesterday's tipis
rings lie (an archipelago stretching into a green sea)
beyond windows gilded in the dropping sun. There was
guilt enough to build this house, to lay down second
grade lino, hang a fake chandelier, and install a toilet.
Administering the Indian Act, no one divined running
water and only the wind sings through the cracks in
the outhouse walls and around stones
diving for a new world.

My snapshots from this cruise are double-exposed,
Christopher: behind the colours,
your face haunting me.

About Muskrat

In the beginning is the holocaust for in the beginning are just words after all and before the big bang there is only a drum and the beating of rain on leaves already losing colour before the word-flood rises, throwing up ships of holy causes, and we are begging to become beginners again but all beginnings are wholly consumed and the world is without end.

Again, in the beginning is water, holy chaos, source of watts and riots, pulling worlds together, drowning gold bullion and holy wayfarers, rescuing wampum from *keemosabies*, greenwater greywater brownwater heaving, swelling, breaking land, foaming and curling over the drowning.

Again, in the beginning is Muskrat and his friend, Weesageechak friend of the Creator who is pissed off, drunk with anger because blood is baking on land and boiling in water. Weesageechak, where are you?

Again, in the beginning, Weesageechak, the wisdom of humanity. She refuses again to teach the mysteries of roots, transforming edible good and evil into refuse by turning off her tv mindset which reports the outbreak of thefts and conquests. Muskrat rises on yellow tides, on

swirling brown waves. Weesageechak goes surfing and gets her picture taken as Madonna.

And again, in the beginning, Weesageechak mourns. Creator receives the evening and the morning as a new day, a good day for recreation. Weesageechak, trickster friend who ate the world, will be the vehicle because there is hydro and she will have power to make the Cree and their relations when she finds enough mud to hawk for a hunting bell. Weesageechak doesn't know yet about creating gold in bells but hawk-eyed Muskrat knows it is a good day to dive.

And still again, in the beginning, is a tree near the river Orinoco, an orange tree on the rim of paradise, orange with marigolds and the eyes of a Jew preferring expulsion to conversion. There's also a pair of dashboard dice hanging from a branch, and an apple and a pear coming from nowhere. The man, who will carry this wandering Jew's name, takes the pear. The woman, appalled, sailor and mother of sailors, gathers the marigolds to make Mary a gold pall.

In the end as in the beginning, is the land and the land is full with its forms, its divisions held together by the falling waters. There is no hiding in the cold night, in the rising wind smelling of prairie grass and smoke, crowded city and sea foam.

In the end, as in the beginning, sewage chokes the sea, flames reach us from Europe's ovens, from the sun dark at Hiroshima's noon. Silent cries of dying scream from floods of drought, from the plenitude of famine, from reservations cancelled, and amber-gold shards scattered under city bridges etherized across the river.

In our open boats we see only the waves, and the clouds of the holocaust on every horizon. Sailors are poets, envisioning land before it can be seen and looking for markers in an unmarkable journey. In the end, as in the beginning, we can only back into the rollers combing the shore and tumble again into the sea.

Even so, come Weesageechak.

Preparing the Last Day

Marigolds and roses are swimming in the wind
when Itiba comes gathering, teaching them to sing.
Blossoming, shimmering, a marigold on blue:
petals of the sun fall on waves laughing green.

The morning of the evening of her world's last day,
Itiba plucks marigolds, petalling her psalms,
trembling, scattering seeds to save them from harm:
her manioc, her tomatoes, and her nights dreaming plague.

Her visions are of insects, pale with death and eating
blood-gold flowers, their shells glistening in the waves
breaking and foaming on Guanahaní's sand:
petals of the sun spill on waves beating red.

Itiba drops petals on the paths of the dead,
lays a rose-branch in the graveyard, another in the sea.
Feasting, dancing around her old world's fire,
she wonders why the ancestors are shivering tonight.

Marigolds and roses will swim in the wind
when Itiba sails far away, forgetting how to sing.
Blossoming, shimmering, a marigold on blue:
petals of the sun drift to waves mourning green.

These Are Pictures of You, Christopher.

SNAPSHOT 1: This is *De Bry's* portrait, engraved when you were already dead some ninety years. Can you make out the words holding your figure like a coffin?

> *:Christopher Columbus of Liguria, first inventor of India, 1492, who on a sailing ship penetrated to the far west Indies, and first made known the American soil, expert in the stars and ennobled by his attempt, looked like this.*

SNAPSHOT 2: Here we are inside the Academy of Oceanography and Reconstruction Sciences.

Travel Agent: Come cruise the Mediterranean!
Latin Professor: It's better in the Bahamas.
Apprentice Poet: Can you re-invent the dead?
Latin Professor: These words were not in the beginning.
Apprentice Poet: They map this photocopy of a magazine copy of an engraved copy of Columbus.
Latin Professor: *(mouth hanging open)* Another sailor who wants to throw the Admiral overboard! We need our heroes.
Travel Agent: Come cruise the Caribbean!
Apprentice Poet: I'm signing up to discover what to do when you find a hero in your water.
Latin Professor: On what cruise?
Apprentice Poet: This poem.
Latin Professor: Will I be in it?
Apprentice Poet: *(mouth hanging open)*

SNAPSHOT 3: At sea in the poet's mind.

Your face, Christopher, crosses the gap
where we sit in an office in a department
of classics. I make up

what you're thinking; I can't deconstruct
your calculations, your visions of paradise in
a world too small under your wig and cornered hat.

The folds of your gown lie
carefully as your engraver,
sharing the conspiracy,

leaves only a few frowns, a touch
of puffiness in your face, and lines
bending around your lips.

There are bags under your eyes.
You stare suspiciously at the fabricator
who clothes and discloses you.

SNAPSHOT 4: If you look outside the frame you can tell it was raining the day the picture was taken.

Latin Professor: Can you read this portrait now?
Apprentice Poet: It has become a prime signifier.
Travel Agent: Come cruise....What fire?
Latin Professor: You know, it's too bad the Spiks had to find the Americas first. They could've had Voltaire's land of ice and snow and the rest of us the gold, the sun and the tourism.
Travel Agent: Come cruise the Caribbean!
Apprentice Poet: Do we spika the language?
Travel Agent: *(mouth hanging open)*

The Iroquois Go West, Too, and Look for Paradise

Louis and his brother, standing on the shore
where Muskrat swims and leaves patter
through branches, glide their canoe
into water carrying life, running high
and abundant.

(Alexander Mackenzie leaves them
to discover Bella Bella, the Pacific,
and the people who discovered the world
when it was new the first time after
Raven's flights.)

Louis and his brother from longhouses on an island
older than Montreal, are confined by church,
residence schools, and government on behalf
of bottom lines who are gold, land and fur.
Confined like children to their rooms
reserved for dying in Caughnawaga.

(They lead the Scots' Columbus west
and plan their own inventions.)

Louis and his brother set out to dive
for a handful of earth from which to create
another island beyond swirling waves,
beyond migrating waves that curl
over sediments and break
the prairies.

(There are returns. The Scotsman
hires the brothers for his trip
back to Montreal. The brothers
take their families to another island,
real and claimed from no one
and in no one's name.)

Not looking for China or the Indian Act,
these Iroquois of the west
give their handful of earth
to Weesageechak of the woodland Cree
and sail for paradise
among grasses rolling like waves
and breaking on the Rockies.

2ND
VOYAGE:

ENCOUNTERS

✡ P O S T C A R D S ✡

I was thinking of a photograph someone had taken of me.
--"Billy the Kid"

Dear Ysabel and Ferdinand:

On January 2, your Highnesses put an end to the war with the Moors and I saw your royal banners placed by force of arms on the towers of the Alhambra. As enemies of the sect of Mahomet and, having expelled all Jews from your dominions, Your Highnesses commanded me to go to India. For which purpose, I have it in mind to compose a book and to illustrate everything in a true picture.

--Christopher, on the eve of sailing, 2 Aug/92

Dear Noah:

Of every clean animal you must take seven pairs, a male and its female; of the unclean animals you must take one pair to preserve their species throughout the earth.

Ysabel: The fish here are surprisingly unlike ours, painted in a thousand ways and the colours are so fine that everyone wondered and took pleasure in the sight. Throughout the island the trees and plants are as green as in Andalusia in April. The singing of small birds is so sweet that no one could ever wish to leave this place.

As I was walking beside one of the lagoons I saw a snake, which we killed. I am bringing you the skin. As soon as the inhabitants saw us they ran away, leaving their houses. A few of the men approached us. I asked them for water, and they came down to the beach with their gourds full and gave it to us with delight. I ordered that they be given a string of little glass beads.

After this I shall set out for Cuba and Hispaniola and according to whether I find a quantity of gold or spices I shall decide what to do next.

--Christopher, in the Caribbean, 16 & 21 Oct/92

I went to view all this this morning to decide where a fort could be built though I see no necessity to do so since these people are very unskilled in arms, as your majesties will discover from seven whom I caused to be taken and brought aboard.

--Christopher, Hispaniola, 14 Oct/92

Baedeker's Guide to Paradise

1

The interpreter on your expedition
to write new names while bearing
the name of Christ in the names
of their most Christian Majesties,
is Luis de Torres, Jew. Among
peoples to be renamed he will be
fluent in
            Spanish
            Hebrew
            Aramaic
            and Arabic.

"Jew" was not an entitlement
given Luis by your beloved Regina,
your Ysabel, and her confessor Tomas,
"the Inquisitor," de Torquemada.
After Grenada, you were entitled
Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy
of a world you unnamed.
                        :signs
permitted Luis were
      a baptism by cleansing truth
      deportation through purifying order
      the administration of ethnic cleansing.

Luis elected death
with Christ adding survival
at sea to sign systems
provisioned on board
his mind with the baggage
of language and the banners
of trade samples.

The Baedeker of your mind tells you,
Christopher, that people in the new world
speak languages Ysabel has conquered
and exiled. (Luis de Torres
will not have much to do, will he?)
You will interpret this expedition,
reading wind and sky, searching
for what the sea can signify
and on your return, claiming
your names, you will illustrate
worlds you are already composing.

2

Between night's setting
and dawn's first shadows
:maps consulted.

Between love's storm
and ambition's ocean
:letter to Beatriz.

You are too ennobled to offer
marriage to your son's mother
as night is split by a rooster

again, as glory glitters
on the ocean-sea and you take
eat and drink, body and blood.

But will it be for your comfort?
You have invested in Paradise. You take
your signs in power: bodies and blood

break and are shed as the glitter
of your name drops to sign the waves
between the setting night and dawn's shadows.

3

The rivers of Paradise were four but here
three meet and the Saltés, Tinto and Odiel
spill to the sea, to differing worlds,
casting off four ships in the morning.

One to signify the world curves in the medium;
one to rename the Queen of Sheba and her home;
one to find the fourth river and take gold from those
who use it only to inscribe their naked graces;
and one to sail the unturning tides of holocaust.

The *Santa María*, named for the virgin
Queen of Heaven, financed by the Queen
of Spain and her husband. Unclassifiable,
she is about to make her titanic voyage.

The *Niña* and the *Pinta*, classified
as 60 ton *nao*'s, financed with unrecorded will
by the citizens of Palos, port of departure,
and crewed by forty seamen lost to history's deep.

One unnamed ship bearing Spain's last Jews,
who, having payed for their cruise with homes
and possessions left behind, sail among
nightmares of uncovered, burning bodies.

The voyage to a new world order begins
with a bracing west by south-west wind
and scales of the sun falling to sea,
signifying, as yet, nothing.

Christopher, This Is a Photograph of Me.

It was taken in black and white
when I was eight and is fading now but
four people on the deck of Cunard's *Saxonia* remain
partially identifiable.

My father bends into the photograph, his hair
clipped and Vitalised; white shirt and tie, dark
jacket under a grey sky, he leans with unpractised
casualness over the family he is taking to another
world.

My grandmother will stay in France when the
ship's horn blows; for now she grips my arm,
staring at her daughter who has been so briefly
home and who now sails again for a continent
behind the spot where, unseen, she takes this
picture.

My hair is mussed by the wind or Grand-
mère's hand; pouting I hold up, for the
record, the camera she has given me; I'll
make my own pictures later in that world
already closing around me
and my sister, who for now looks up confidently into the
camera, a new doll stiff under her arm and Dad's hand in
hers.

In the background: another ship and the embarkation
building; the *Saxonia's* red and white lifesaver is attached
to a black and white railing where new moons rise on our
lips.

(The photograph was taken five hundred years after you
were my age, already working in the family weaving
business and sailing the coast of Liguria; in your
mother's picture of you, you also are preparing to cross
the ocean and make new pictures of the world.

It is difficult to say whether we are smiling
from embarrassment or naive confidence, or from
an anxiety that will be relieved
when we sail.)

How the Sea Was Born Before Disney

They say that once it was sometimes told
that the Spirit Of All Spirits took off
for new worlds that were his to inherit.
And Itiba wept.

Itiba Cahubaba cried and mourned
even though history's atoms hadn't been
discovered and there was only memory.
The Ancient Bleeding One dropped
to a bed of marigolds mourning
: her Lover under evening waterfalls
her Creator in morning forests
her Companion in black soil at nightfall.
The colours fell silent from their birds
and there weren't any fish.

Giving birth, taking
death, Itiba's body
was broken, and
shed four children
in the morning.
They dove through
waters of her
womb and surfaced
into a world
where they were
each other's twins.

If there was a sea, four ships might sail but
there were four children. Now one was called Scabs
Deminán, signifying venereal power and visionary
marks. A second, earth-coloured, wanted to know how

to sing out in the fields of Babylons to come. The third, who was sun-coloured, asked how to mine the dust and ore of poems in long days forced underground. And there was a colourless child stumbling under the weight of a dead prophet-turned-child again, babbling about the silence of unnamed fears and unvenerated desire.

In the presence of their absent mother, the four raided her kitchen. They turned up the music and began to party. Even as they were dancing, even as they were eating and drinking, they sensed the Spirit of Spirits parking in the winds outside. Hurrying to hang their mother's gourd, it dropped. Itiba's gourd fell and broke open.

So much water.

Earth, overcome, gave fish
to paint the sea, and sent colours
their birds to laugh again and
splatter them through the forest.

They say that once it may have
been told that perhaps this
is how the sea was born.

On Board the *Santa Maria*, October 11-12, 1492

these are ways to read signs and in the end
it is the sea always the sea only the sea running
high running smooth running as a river concealing
currents of death breaking life open in its waves
breaking itself on beaches beyond every Ultima Thule

: the signs in the end are
a rose-branch drifting at sea
a fire burning the night
a cry from a sailor from Lepé

and the troubadour is right for we'll all be sailors
until the sea can free us and our perfect bodies,
no longer broken

: and the signs in the end
there is no China here
there is no tea and oranges
the nut tree bears no fruit,
not even a golden pear

and Suzanne signs a leather coat
and Madonna's breasts are captured
and traffic halts and you fall
out of your ships

: in the morning there will be these signs
sun pouring down like honey
lovers wearing gold and feathers
seaweeds and marigolds

and in the end what do you signify, drowned
beneath your ocean-sea?

Otter goes bungee jumping

1

There was sea only
sea always water
falling increasingly
unable to wash
earth clean of the smoke
and blood of bodies
broken and falling
increasingly forsaken
for the bottom
of every line.

2

And there was Weesageechak whose guitar had been washed away. And he sat in the water and wept. Otter sat with him, and Beaver and Muskrat also, their heads resting in his crotch. Weesageechak didn't know what a hawk's bell would hold but with a handful of earth from under the water he could make an island to live on.

3

Weesageechak: Hey, we're going to starve here. Why doesn't somebody dive through this shit and bring me some earth. Then I'll make us a new world.
Otter, my old friend! You're brave, you're strong, you're active. Dive deep get me a handful of the stuff and I'll give you a life-time pass to the West Edmonton Mall.

Otter: No bullshit, okay? You want old dirt? I'll go down and see what I can get but I don't want the West Edmonton Mall. Fish. That's what I want, just fish.

Weesageechak: Okay, okay! A life-time supply of fish for a handful of mud.

Otter: A handful for you is a truck-load for me.

Travel Agent: Come cruise the....

Weesageechak & Otter: Get lost!

Weesageechak: Have you heard of a hawk's bell?

Otter: Like a bicycle bell?

Weesageechak: I don't know. What the hell; bring what you can in your own hands.

4

Three times Otter dove through swirling, bloodied, muddied waters. Through broken bodies in auto-wreckers' yards. Through steel, glass and corporate cement towering far below the surface. Through tv-lit basement suites, back-alleys painted with windblown mall junk, and prairies where grass waved through water.

Three times Otter dove because his need for air

was a bungee cord snapping him back to the surface before he could find the old earth.

On the first dive he found the body of an old man who had had his fifteen seconds on tv at thirty-five below outside a Calgary liquor store. "Are you still going to drink?" asked the mitt-held microphone. "Why not?" the old guy answered, whiskers poking through frozen air. He died in his Kelowna Dry Red sleep, curled against the back-alley wall of a shopping centre.

On his second dive, Otter found the body of a girl the same age as his kidnapped daughter. For a last time she lay child-like in a rented room in a Vancouver house recently bought by a consortium from the land Columbus would think he'd discovered after all. The man who sold her crack pulled on his pants and turned off the tv.

On his third dive, Otter found the body of a woman sitting where she died of a heart-attack in a house in a village by a lake in northern Manitoba. Her husband was looking for food with his gun in the bush. Her children were sawing wood and hacking a hole in the lake to bring water back to boil on a wood stove. Only the tv had electricity. She would not wash their clothes. Her family would not go now to church to vote on a new constitutional order.

Three times Otter dove and his grief was a bungee cord snapping him back to the surface before he could find the old earth. And still there was the sea.

Itiba's Valentine

1 (1993)

Once, when a poet was visiting his cousins in Wichita Kansas, there was a flash summer and a flood. Increasing rains impregnated the river and in the aftermath, where swirling chocolate and whipped-cream waters continued breaking free from drains and sewers, he and his two cousins set sail to rediscover America and bring back pop and candy from the store at the end of the block.

The kid's ship, like those of the other two, was assembled from pieces of scrap lumber in his uncle's garage and one long nail, hammered flat. Even so, aged nine, he could imagine he was captain of the Niña. Perhaps it was the Pinta. The eldest cousin claimed the Santa María.

Now he builds from orange characters on a screen. His ships are erasable. And capable of colonizing paper. Crossing the street after a reading once, his words launched themselves from his hands, sails billowing under passing cars, tacking through salt and snow. He yelled and laughed and went home. No ship touches more than the seaskin. All ships are erasable. Any ship may dive. Still, it's the imagining that makes sailors.

The poet has forgotten what kind of pop he bought that afternoon in Wichita, Kansas.

2 (1493)

Five times my body has reminded me,
five times since the Admiral
took us from Guanahaní.

Clutched against
the water's breasts, my womb tells me again
how the sea was born and why the ocean
boils.

Now we are one less
from seven, roped
with the wind
to rails and washed
in sea water and
(even this storm
cannot drive it from us),
the stench of men hiding
under cloth and leather,
men who will not clean
themselves, who infect
the gold they touch
with the bacilli
of murder.

3 (1493)

Guacanagarí has gone from us, walking home among waves upholding him like his sons and his daughters waiting on Guanahaní. Our Speaker, since before I was a girl, he feared for the marigolds and our laughter.

He agreed to guide the Admiral away but as we travelled, island to island, he forgot whose speaker he was.

The Admiral's own interpreter, grief bearing light behind his own eyes, understood what was unsaid among our islands but not what was spoken. He was an ornament, to be cherished like my lover's gold necklace. Guacanagarí was a stone axe. The Admiral did not want to caress the body before him, only to break it and become Aurifer.

We began sailing to the sun's morning bath; Guacanagarí's spirit prepared its own journey. The sea grew stronger between us and the islands; Guacanagarí grew weaker. He ate salt spray and wind, refusing the food and water these men served us. They took him by his arms and his legs and threw his body into the water. Crazy men with their shame-covered organs made jokes about fish and his penis as though this Speaker's sons and daughters bore no grace, no intelligence, no arts of discovery and recovery for a world we were all leaving behind.

4 (1493)

So I sing for Itiba
whose name I bear.
Together we lift waves
and bring down winds.

The Admiral sleeps under a sail in a corner in the stern. Sailors cry remembering the *Santa Maria*, forgetting the Virgin, and her Son born the day her ship died, borne across this sea by a man asleep under a sail.

The sea skys above
us, waves cross, breaking
over the ship and against
each other. All day,
all night, I stand, bound
to the railing, my face
in the wind and all day,
again, I sing for the waters.

5 (1493)

The first vow the sailors make
is to visit Santa María de Guadelupe.
A cross on a bean and beans in a cap
and the Admiral draws the lot.
I sing for Guanahaní
and the wind drives
the ship without promise
of shelter, howling with
the cries of those
killed in the sign
of the Admiral who writes
his Valentine letter
in gusts of fear.

The second vow the sailors make
is to visit Santa Maria de Loreto.
A cross on a bean and beans in a cap
and seaman Pedro de Villa promises to go.
I sing of my beloved
and the sea boils,
a cauldron on fire.
The Admiral seals
his letter in a cask
and trusts it to the sea,
the wind crying of naked lovers
searching for each other
before the endless return
of ships endless as waves.

The third vow the sailors make
is to visit Santa Clara de Moguer.
A cross on a bean and beans in a cap
and again the Admiral will go.
I can no longer sing and waves
wash over the sides and twisted faces
fall increasingly from the sky,
mouths open in silenced screams
dying without shelter before
me and behind me, and under
a burning sky this Admiral
thinks he has almost found.

The fourth vow the sailors make
is to visit the Virgin, walking
barefoot and bared bodied, except
for their shirts. They cross

themselves and the sea
accepts their little nakedness,
their little faith.

6 (1493)

I forget how to sing. The hidden sun is discharged, passing between the clouds and the still heaving waves. The sea turns to blood. The Admiral, fully clothed, gives thanks to the Virgin. Unclean and frightened, sailors relieve themselves with *Salve Regina.* The Admiral's interpreter signs to me, asking why I laugh. Because I am Itiba, I tell him. I do not know if he understands me. But we are sailing for Spain, clutched in the water's breasts, my body telling me again how the sea was born and why the ocean will boil.

7 (1993)

Once, on the last day lingering between summer and fall, on a lake barricaded between two provinces, a sailor took out his canoe, his notebook and camera. He took pictures of the light falling through the trees, of a beaver for whom, the poet thought, he did not exist, intending to hold fragments of paradise in new pictures. A breeze caught him off balance. A shift of breath and he spoke the canoe into the water. The negatives of Eden sank into the old earth. His poems, drifting, drank the stifled wave and sank. It has been reported that this sailor is still swimming.

Hispaniola 1495

whitegold sun washes sky dissolving blue
into jade water heaving swelling hesitating
to curl over gold sand charging breaking
foaming and bleaching sand ripples stretching
to palms and waves curling again
green over gold

he does not believe there is gold
on this island he believes
in ysabel
                invisible ysabel
present in ships she gives him
to bring him this isle of spain
invincible ysabel whose ferdinand
supports her even though he can't
pay his army

he will ask laughing lovers with sweet
talk to believe gold he does not
believe will be left behind
                so ysabel may laugh
he will ask for dust to remake him

only a hawk's bell full for ysabel only
a hawk's bell of gold dust only
a hawk's bell every three months to be brought
to the fort of santo domingo and their lord
who will show them his pleasure and give
bell bringers copper discs to shine
in the sun around their necks

and those who have no discs will lose
their laughter and their gentle arms
and under a whitegold sun their sweet talk
shall wash into the sand

whitegold sun washes sky dissolving blue
into jade water heaving swelling hesitating
to curl over red sand charging breaking
foaming and bleaching sand ripples stretching
to graves and waves curling again
green over red over gold

3RD
VOYAGE:

ESTIMATIONS

When you're on the set with 500 extras dying of the heat, you can't afford to flub your lines.
--actor Gérard Depardieu (1492: Conquest of Paradise)

In Guadeloupe, enjoy the tropical sun on the Eden of the Caribbean. Splendid beaches, mountain ranges, waterfalls, glass topped lakes all form a backdrop to your stay. You can shop the stylish boutiques of rues Nozieres and Frebault for the luxury products--fragrance, crystal, clothing--Paris is famous for.
--"Ports of Call"

✡ P O S T C A R D S ✡

The inhabitants go naked. They have no iron or steel or arms and are not capable of using them because they are amazingly timid. If one asks for anything they have they never say no. On the contrary, they offer a share to anyone with demonstrations of heartfelt affection, and they are immediately content with any small thing, valuable or valueless, that is given.
--Christopher, 15 Feb / 93

1492: Conquest of Paradise *cost $45 million US, the most ever spent on a European production. This is the second Columbus film of the year, celebrating--or otherwise--the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival from Europe. The first film, "Christopher Columbus: the Discovery," which had Tom Selleck as King Ferdinand, and an understandably unknown actor as the explorer, has sunk with all hands. It painted Columbus as a buffoon with a boat.*
--Marilyn August and Marc Horton, 10 Oct / 92

The Taino love their neighbours as themselves and their way of speaking is the sweetest in the world, always gentle and smiling.
--Christopher, Christmas Day / 92

They entered my dreams and nightmares.
--"Billy the Kid"

Columbus and his crew stopped the wanton slaughter of virgin ladies.
--a Knight of Columbus, 13 Oct / 92

Copper Mines & Pop-ups

I first heard your name in a copper mining town in central Africa where the real names of the hill broken under Cecil Rhodes, like those of islands you imagined you discovered, were unspoken or lost. In the depths of the rainy season, school walls and roof put up their afternoon resistance, amplifying a storm on the screen at the front of the assembly hall where the *Santa María* was making us seasick in our school uniforms.

The ship sailed as it still does in the pop-up book my aunt in the drylands of Kansas sent me that year for Christmas with a book on Davey Crockett whose exploits, I'll confess it now, interested me more than yours did. I'd not yet even seen a bear although I'd seen several snakes, a zillion ants, some giraffes and one or two elephants and once, at a distance, something that might have been a lion refusing to distinguish between Angolan bush and Rhodesian. But it was easier in the centre of that great green and brown continent to imagine killing a bear than sailing an ocean blue for at the age of seven I'd already killed a dragon St. George had missed, a rogue hippo, and Pete Bell the missionary kid who, as my mother frequently reminded me, chewed every mouthful of food forty times.

When the three ships came sailing in that Christmas Day in an African morning they had real rigging made of fine string and on the back of the book there was a view of the ship from its wheel, a wheel I could turn and, through a cut-out wedge, follow the map you followed so that here on the Alberta prairies I discover one or two pop-up books published for your quincentenary. I have to tell you, though, they're pretty cheap, their colours garish, the ships and sailors more like puffy cartoon figures, without rigging or a wheel to turn and I'm looking again at my book and I don't know what's become of the wheel that was there when I first heard your name.

Beaver Takes a Dive

When Otter failed, Weesageechak
sweet-talked Beaver into diving
for a little bit of old earth
from which to make a new world.

"Go down Beaver," Trickster said, "and I'll make
a companion for you from your flesh and bones
to live in a lodge I'll build for you
on an island I'll make from the mud you bring me."

On the first dive, Beaver saw Samaná,
source of a stream rising, reddening the sea.

> The Admiral had stopped again on his Isle
> of Spain to take on fresh water and
> provisions for the run home, and caulk
> his leaking journal and two ships.
>
> The Admiral thought the people of Samaná
> different from those he'd met already,
> as unashamedly naked but unashamedly armed
> with bows and the faces of resistance.
>
> He sent seven sailors to trade for bows
> and arrows. When it was over four Indians
> were captive on his ships, two had left
> their blood on the beach, all others gone.

The Bay of Arrows behind him, the Admiral
sailed for Spain and Beaver rose for air.

On the second dive Beaver found cassava and
why the sea boils in a crucible of tears.

> The Taino were dying, lovers made extinct.
> They had no resistance except cassava against
> a flood of pigs and cattle, settlers and their
> cargoes of viruses and fear-spectacled eyes.
>
> A shortage of slaves in the mines and fields
> but always plenty of cassava and exile,
> bitter juices squeezed before the bread
> was made, drank as the bread was broken.

Their words stolen, the Taino were buried,
desalojamiento, and Beaver surfaced with smallpox.

Third time pays nothing as Beaver is scorched diving
through oil slicks burning off an island coast.

> At the base of a bank, its windows burning
> in the sunset, Beaver finds a crumpled newspaper
> from Davis Inlet and the Innu have no resistance
> to resettlement and neglect except gasoline.

Desalojamiento. Finding no earth, Beaver swallows water:
Columbus thinks a drowned beaver signifies land ahead.

Contact Lens

I wonder about your eyes. About the colours
they cast and how they were made, conceived
as your parents eyed each other then scraped
your sockets clean and lined them with dreams
of voyages to a paradise they couldn't find.

Your eyes became albums, the pictures
pasted, brown tones seeping through
white borders around the focal points. There
: your parents laughing as you speak
words they think are no-words,
as you run naked in front of visitors,
and try to communicate the mysteries
of charcoal charted on kitchen walls
: the ship you sailed across
your mother's laundry tub, then lost
in the harbour, a great sea beyond you.
Images piloted your optic nerve, developed
in the broken narratives of seagulls,
in the flights of traders and fishermen.

Frame after frame, you were cast in
your first movie, shot in old colours
by new directors
: your mother keeping the household
together on short ration
: a gilt-covered Queen of Heaven
: your father voyaging on business
: games of Turks and Crusaders, of hunting
antipodeans in the southern reaches of the house
: the fatigue and aches, the straining
and sweating of carding wool, hucking

bales, furling and unfurling sails
: ocean-blue light flowing from the Virgin's window.

Later you rented videos: Marco Polo's
encounters through oriental dimensions,
Ptolemy's enclosed sea, John Mandeville's
geography of Paradise. You spliced
their images and stored them
in the canisters of your memory.

When at last you took the director's chair,
your stars had played conquests in Grenada
and the Canary Islands. You didn't understand
the talk, or measurings, of the naked people
you visited. To get the show underway, you gave
away mirrors and glass eyes to the extras
in *The Return of Marco Polo* and *Salvador I*,
and in commercials to attract IMF investment,
shooting in a light you remembered
from outlandish bodies drifting
off Galway Bay. All this was business;
what amazed you was how the islands
looked like Andalusia in spring.

Now I wonder about my eyes. About
the colours they cast. About how
they are made.

Skinheads Kick Aztecs

1 The Quebec Provincial Police confront a Mohawk Warrior over a Cemetery

QPP: Hey! What the f--k do you think you're doing?

Mohawk: Clearing these stones out of the way.

QPP: What the f--k for?

Mohawk: Don't give yourself a heart attack! It's kind of difficult to play lacrosse with these stones in the way. That's all.

QPP: Lacrosse? You f--g figuring on playing f--g

lacrosse here?

Mohawk: Yeah. When we get rid of these obstructions, take down a few of those Dutch Elms, take out the Kentucky Blue and let some wild grasses grow again, this'll be a great playing field. Maybe you and some of the guys want to take us on!

QPP: We'll f--g take you on, alright. You can't play f--g lacrosse here 'cause this is f--g sacred ground. This is a f--g cemetery, can't you see?

Mohawk: Hey, what's with the hard-on? Let's be civil about this. We can work something out.

QPP: These are the bodies of my forebears.

Mohawk: We can put their bones in our new museum.

QPP: F--k you! Get off our land. (*Alarmed*) Hey! What the f--k do you think you're doing! Hey, get away from my car! You do anything to this car and I'll f--g call a regiment of the f--g Department of Indian Affairs to come to the aid of a civil f--g power.

Mohawk: Have you the constitution for it?

2 You're not Alice but here's a Looking Glass

The Lincoln, its rich, black body resting in the night, was in the parking lot across from the concert hall. Chrome and glass glistened under a street lamp. Across the street, in the stage-lit hall, the car's owner listened to Dvorak's *New World Symphony*.

A kid in a black leather jacket and biker's boots broke, almost unobtrusively, a small sail-shaped window and took nine-tenths of the law. He was looking for money which he didn't find but what he did find surpassed his fantasies. The upholstery smelled paradisical; he ripped out pieces to take home. The stereo was Blaupunkt; he turned it on. Hell, he thought, he'd take the car itself. The concert broke in on him. He listened curiously as he groped for the wires to launch the car. Then changed stations.

Cruising, the kid was caught by police. "I never stole it," he told the historian in court. "I discovered it."

3 One Small Step for Somebody

a red and black doublet, a sword gleaming
a green and gold banner fluttering
the emblazoned "Y" waving

sea burning blue

the speaker stands proud
a green and yellow parrot held out
red and black faces watching waiting

4 Rites of Passage

You kiss aboriginal ground (or is it your name?) as you proclaim news of unoriginal title. Perhaps you are only seasick, or providing a precedent for later voyaging vicars of Christ. Or are you lifting Guanahaní to your lips like my friend who kissed his winning lottery ticket? His eyes didn't see the paper in front of him, only the cruise of his dreams.

You kiss the ground and coming ashore behind you the *Niña's captain* wears an SS colonel's uniform and the *Pinta's* the cap and jacket of the pilot of the *Enola Gay* and you plant a cross as Cortez looks down impatiently from his horse and empty saddlebags while Cartier follows your lead on Mont Royal and Champlain maps the streets.

You kiss the ground and your jackbooted, head-shaven crew leap ashore, their tattoos speaking new worlds into being: "give 'em hell," and "all pipes, no dykes." After you the lawyer, the preacher, the candlestick-maker, and the investor-general slip away with plans of their own and human parrots swing in detention centres from Chile to El Salvador as crosses burn the nights from hills in Georgia to a farm in Provost.

As you kiss the ground you give the Taino glass beads, hawk's bells and broken crockery (they give you balls of spun cotton, birds, and food) and over the ridge Aztecs see a bleeding rift in the sky and a woman cries the children are lost. And before you are borne on your fifth voyage the Taino will have gone without records of their deaths. Or how you kissed the ground.

5. One Giant Step for Someone

a red and black doublet, a sword falling
a green and gold banner limping
the emblazoned "Y" folded

sea rising red

the speaker sails angrily
the green and yellow parrot gone
red and black faces watching weeping

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*: Warm-ups

When Weesageechak, still drifting
at sea, turned on the tv, Otter
and Beaver had been eliminated

and Muskrat was walking out
on the high tower's board.
By a trick of the camera

Muskrat jumped and tucked
in the air above Barcelona's
glass and cement towers above

green-bronzed and red-tiled
roofs above the stadium and
the water so apparently clear.

"Go for it, Muskrat, my old
friend," said Weesageechak,
kissing the screen. "A handful

of old earth in your forepaws
and the sea'll free us and you
can have everything you want."

And Do You, Christopher, Take Liberty?

Again I find your name, in a magazine where words circumnavigate your head exploding in a language lying in my memory's grave though once it was reconstructed by a Croat lawyer who had fled Tito to be told to practice his English by teaching high school students to conjugate.

Your eyes catch me, your head framed by thin, straight lines and an ocean-sea of white-space and the charges of the *New Internationalist*. You are (in the editor's words) regarded in the US with the warm reverence Italian fascists still feel for Mussolini. You lack a daughter in Parliament but the Duce has neither an official holiday nor his pronouns cluttering the indices of atlases. Columbus, Ohio, reports the editor, will host a $100 million international flower show, and your statue in Barcelona will marry the Statue of Liberty.

Actually, your wedding clothes and jewellery were exhibited in the capitals of Europe while the wedding went off without a hitch in a chapel in Los Vegas on Valentine's Day and you're probably wondering who's raking in the money for all this since you don't have an agent but for summer this year Canadians unveiled a new statue of the Queen riding a horse the RCMP gave her years ago, said to be the only statue of a horse ridden by a female monarch. No Ysabel, this Queen unveils herself for our national anniversary, a figure who has launched her share of ships, backed a dark horse or two and the occasional invasion and renaming. You were spared this kind of unveiling until after your death because your fifteen minutes were not under the glare of tv lights so all we have of you now, like this magazine's copy of an engraving and these poems around you, are what sailors conjugate in your image. *Veni vidi inventi*.

In the white-space of winter on the Canadian prairies I'm looking for a portrait of you to enclose within my words. Who's going to give the bride away? The honeymoon suite of the Holiday Inn in downtown Beijing has been reserved for you and Liberty and your conjugal discoveries. You'll reach your dream after all although there's no gold in the square beyond the hotel. Only marigolds.

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*:
the 1st Dive

Already it was the fourth week
of Advent when John the Diver,
with a forward tuck and two
and a half summersaults, showed
the Pharisees in the stands
how he sailed, a voice crying
in the sea's wild blueness.

And fray Antón Montesino climbed
Santo Domingo's diving tower,
Admiral Diego Columbus among
the crowds come for a spectacle.
A surprising backwards flip and
four corkscrew turns and a voice
cries in their conscience, thunders
over the river where they drown,
insensitive until, knifing the water,
fray Antón's dive anointed them.
"How can you live," he cried,
reaching for a towel, "in such
a lethargical dream?" Too late,
the spectators demanded refunds
and returned to the venue where
drivers ferry Indians away.

And Muskrat surfaced
with one grain of dirt.

A Columbus A B (Oh! Sh. . .!) & C Book

Amerigo Vespucci
accessorizes America.

This **B**earer has no bread
to break in Bermuda.

Count the captains
commuting from Castille.

Digging for discourse
in Santo Domingo.

An **E**rrant explorer
effects epidemics.

The **F**loundering founder
fancies the fandango
in the first fort.

A **G**overnor with gout
grabs his gold and is gone.

In Santa Maria's **H**awse
a hemistich hustles
a hidden helicopter.

An **I**ndian with an identikit
instructs the inventor of
the anniversary industry.

A **J**erk in a jerkin
jackhammers Jamaica.

A **K**ewpie Kristofer on his keister
sits under a klieg light dreaming
of the Klondike, and of kryptonite.

A **L**abel for a legend
from Liguria and a
lugubrious ledger.

A **M**egalomaniac minds a monomaniac.

A **N**utty navigator negotiates
to nuke Nirvana.

An **O**ceanographer orchestrates
an offensive, ochry oedema.

Pioneer, pirate, prophet and promoter.

Quotable query in
a quinsied quincentennial.

The **R**eason for Columbus, Ohio.

A **S**easoned sailor
of storms selling
slaves in a space
shuttle.

A **T**ense trickster
terminates as a tv
detective in a tawdry
topcoat.

An **U**gly UFO from Ultima
Thule usurps the underbrush
and underwrites urinal
utilization quotas.

A **V**icious villain
drives a van of vanilla
to his vulgar villa.

A **W**acky wallah waterskis
to Watling Island without
washing.

A **X**ylograph showing
a xenophobe with xanthoma
carrying a xoanon.

A **Y**uppie yankee in Queen Ysabel's yard.

A **Z**any zombie zigzags in
a zoetrope at the zero-hour.

4TH
VOYAGE:

RE-EMBARKATIONS

Little ship, take care! The ocean lies all around you.
--Friedrich Nietzsche

The U.S. government, intent on discovering yet another world, planned to begin scouring the heavens from California Monday [12 Oct/92] seeking signs of intelligent life with powerful telescopes.
--Reuters

If you're ready for a free-spirited and unrestrained adventure, prepare to enjoy Hedonism II. Singles and couples are invited to participate in dance contests, fitness classes, sports tournaments, island picnics and more. Depend on lavishly presented food, caring service and attractive rooms. Enjoy the enchanting beach of free-and-easy Negril. You have the choice of clothing-optional sunbathing. Here the accent is on pleasure!
--Hedonism II Jamaica

The establishment at Edmonton is the most important one in the Saskatchewan district. It boasts of a windmill, a blacksmith's forge, and carpenter's shop. The boats required for the annual voyage to York Factory in Hudson's Bay are built and mended here; carts, sleighs, and harness made, and all appliances required for the Company's traffic between the different posts. Wheat grows luxuriantly, and potatoes and other roots flourish as wonderfully here as everywhere else on the Saskatchewan.
--Milton & Cheadle, 1863.

✡ P O S T C A R D S ✡

. . . they said we will build
silver paradise with a bulldozer
--"Susanna Moodie"

Will it perhaps be said of us one day that we too, steering westward, hoped to reach an India--but that it was our fate to be wrecked against infinity?
--Friedrich Nietzsche

Barcelona 1992

Fire has already flowered in the night sky
and will again, and again, this year exploding
your anniversary in fantasized grandeurs. We have
forgotten how to mourn; we don't know how to celebrate,
only to distract--

Medalled gods dance on an artificial,
lime-stained, played-out field with leaping
devils and monsters rising inflated
from the sea beyond copper and red
ceramic roofs you may once have noticed.

This is the olympiad: to run and sail
before the eyes of distant, unseen beings
set before their screens and untroubled
by the smells of an even older world,
its incense, smoke and sweat not signalled
in the closing night's pantomime.

In the morning, in the harbour
where your statue stares forever
after the ships, sailboarders
will try again not to fall
into the sewage drifting
under a sun burning
unscreened and
indifferent.

Onondaga Madonna, Reviewed

She is photographed leaning modestly, not without cares, catching her breath, sweet scabs of the spruce's body renewing her life. Mother of a rising nation. Sun glistens where sweat lodges on her face, where history and passion gather. She drops herself into a river driving through beeches and maples, through blinking sunlight exposing her nation's precolumbian memorials.

She wipes the sweat from her neck, the barricades from her head, the scenes from her sister's house where the children hid behind the tv, where her sister dropped into her husband's anguished anger. She shields her eyes from an

unblinking sun. To rest. To breathe. To see with the clarity of unseeing.

A shawl lingers over her breasts. Dusty glass beads slip into green leaves and red and yellow forest flowers, the patterning of her nation's fears and promises. Under a summer sun, this Mohawk keeps the Onondaga. She keeps the fires that the longhouse will not fall, keeps the traditions to cover bones with new flesh, to fill them with new breath. From Oka's cemetery nations are rising.

She rises from her spruce and dreams. Her son is a warrior. Not sulking, not burdened with gloom, he will not rest behind these barriers behind camouflaged fatigues and bulleting taunts behind rolled barbed wire. His long grief has sedimentized into anger gleaming in his eyes.

And so this woman roars, driving her quad between her son and young Canadian soldiers. She refuses disciplined words, inflamed words, unspoken words. She pushes apart shouting warriors and loudspeaking soldiers as gas and oil and fear drown the dust rising between them, insulating forgotten memorials of tomorrow.

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*: **the 2nd Dive**

Long before the word is broken and lost,
long before the Admiral, the sea was
here and Weesageechak of a thousand
faces and people of a thousand names.
They received from their elders creation
itself and its mystery, deeper than
that sea, richer than reddened gold, a sure
treasure filling the earth like fish the sea,
or marigolds the paths between the dead and
the living, or laughter spilling from lovers,
its waves exploding. Long before I make
these dives, a smith in a cream cassock and
the scarf of his church's onondaga,
crosses the wilderness of a parking
lot to a newly seen world where tipis
stand and drums beat and the smoke of the fire
rises to circle the earth. He hammers
at manacles forged in old lethargic

dreams. "And long before my people journeyed,"
he says to a face, laughing and wrinkled
(Itiba's mother, a Mohawk woman's sister,
Shawnandithit's daughter), "your people were
here, and you received all from your elders
and we did not hear you, and we were closed
to you, and we confused our Christ's holy
diving with shipping. Can you forgive us?"

And Muskrat surfaced
with another grain of dirt.

Here is Another Picture of You, Christopher

Are you no more than this, then, a poor forked
animal beached on an oak bench, your legs
chained with gout, your fingers adrift on the
storm-tossed folds of your admiral lendings?
You're unbuttoned. You have no titles now.
You're the one ferried from your ship's remains,
your plans wrecked, tossed up on your breaking body.
Ysabel will not see you, nor have you long
to wait and with every passing tide
the waiting litters your memory, weighing
you down under rising, wind-scored water.

But you know how to navigate time, beached
on Jamaica a year and five days, baited
with mutiny, cast off by Hispaniola the colony
you repopulated, Colón. Your bones
would have bleached on the white gold
strand but for the Indians who fed you
not knowing what you carried, but for
Méndez and Fieschi who fled the sea
in an open boat to find a slow ship
to carry you home through the last fall
storms, one mast only surviving
to hold your sails.

Now you are becalmed on a bench, your legs
that once bridged the sea inflamed and swollen.
Your skin is burned like the old sailors
you wove into your boyhood dreams. Under
the last wisps of a morning mist, your eyes,
once sea-coloured, burn red like laser beams

trying to out-run hurricanes raging
around your next voyage. Its wind-rose is
already drawn at your feet where your maps
and charts roll and crash over each other
as you wait to claim what you have taken
and has been taken from you. Your report
cannot be heard, although now the ocean
unseen between you and the dying queen
is not as wide as you imagine it.

> Which film slips over those eyes, and
> through them? There's a snivelling old man,
> full of illusions, who forgets everything
> except who injured him. And a little boy
> whose fiery energy, luminous curiosity, and
> shattering stubbornness blasts the middle ages.
> In the aftermath, where you wait, the scene
> shifts back to the courts where lawyers
> and accountants argue your titles and shares
> while freighters and tankers haul fragments
> of someone's paradise across the sea, your sins
> and short measures contained in the notes
> written in the margins of the ledgers.

You are sitting on the bench, your red hands
clasping ripples in your gown, images
of the world swimming around you: there is
always another voyage for you as you write
to the grieving Ferdinand and promise service
as no one has yet seen. Nor will we.
We're unaccommodated sailors, too, sailing
between disputed and reclaimable histories;
in the end dreams linger like waves, breaking,
reaching between the wrecks of Paradise.

Communion of the Silenced

1

> The inland hills of El Salvador
> are far in time and reach
>
> from the waves washing Guanahaní;
> the soldiers don't wear plumes

and breast plates, and their guns
are more efficient; but the *orden* is

the same. Villages are burned again,
the blood of speakers mixed in coffee

stirred by investors and commanders
on a hill in the District of Columbia.

Golgotha's sacrifice is represented
as a Salvadorean priest sings the words,

adding his name to those of the dead,
called and presented to break the silence

of their laughter. And there are waves
swelling, foaming, falling over each other,

curling around unvoiced voices suspended
in red tape and histories, in real

estate dealt and futures sold.
How do the silenced sing, after all?

2

Call the Taino kidnapped and taken to Spain.
Six caged in their naked best and carrying birds are presented to Ferdinand and Ysabel and baptized. A dress rehearsal. Who toured them through Spain's closed mosques and synagogues? Five sail home and disappear, rumoured to have learned a new language and have gone to Cuba to train for little wars. *Presente!*

Call Doña Felipa Moniz de Perestrello.
A charmed dreamer took her as his wife, to have and to hold for citizenship and a leg up in his conquest of the King of Portugal. Waiting for returns from Guinea, Doña Felipa gives her son Diego, rival Spain's second Viceroy of the Indies, and dies while the new world is a dream colouring the charmer's charts. *Presente!*

Call Beatriz Enríquez de Harana and Doña Beatriz de Peraza y Bobadilla.
A poor bookseller in the green hills of Andalusia lives with Beatriz, daughter of peasants, then loses her in the green and gold islands scribbled in blue sea, her name written invisibly in his journal and in

the accounts of their son, Fernando.

A better Governor than Columbus will be, Doña Beatriz was banished to the Canary Islands by Ysabel because her sails took Ferdinand's breath. She wins the love of an Admiral-in-waiting kicking his heels on the Islands while he waits for the limping *Pinta*. When he leaves, he promises to call and she wishes the Americas luck. *Presente!*

Call Quibian, speaker of a village on the Belén River.
Resisting the Admiral's men come to discover gold, women, and fresh water, he killed ten and forces a less than admirable withdrawal. He continues to search Disneyworld for traces of the captured women and the village they have all left behind. *Presente!*

Call Rodrigo de Triana.
He climbs the rigging and in the grey shadows of landfall sights his winning number. All the way home, he dreams of an expenses-paid flight to Cordova, of sequined Ysabel, glittering under the lights, handing him the promised cheque. But in the night, his claim stub is stolen; he never has coffee with the Queen, and Columbus spends the prize. Rodrigo mends nets and never fishes with an admiral again. *Presente!*

Call the unknown sailor.
Off the coast of Honduras in a cabin cruiser filled with fruit, cotton cloth, and cacao beans, a native trader discovers the Admiral in leaking, worm-ridden boats. He is hijacked to speak as translator, christened "Juan Perez," by the new world's first godfather. When let go, he sails into hurricanes to greet guests with his long grey beard and glittering eye. *Presente!*

Call the uncensored.
As infinite as two, the original inhabitants of Paradise are driven, without census, from destinies written in the manifest in the hand of a lost sailor kissing an island he believes to be Asia to become Admiral of a sea burning like a cauldron. *Presente!*

Call [readers may add here to the liturgy]

3

Crests of the waves of lost Guanahaní,
and streams in the hills of El Salvador
are gathered in one cup and Weesageechak
of uncountable names pisses into it
so the silenced might laugh again
and give the word and great will be
the company who publish it:

and we believe in holy ghosts,
in the scattered words of poets,
the communion of the silenced,
the apology of mourning,
the resurrection of sailors,
and that the sea will be no more.

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*: the 3rd Dive Begun

Where the Pacific rises
and the rain falls,
greasing rocks worn with ages,
breaking open the scent
of red cedar and black mud,
lines are written
in boiling waves and
chain saws set up
crosses to claim land
for offices back home
while drums beat with
raven and eagle wings
through the clatter
of the falling rain.

Where the St. Lawrence rises
and the dust falls,
dulling pines scored by ages,
breaking open rocks
of fear, of long-held
anger, lines are written
in camouflage and barbed
wire, and a policeman
dies, a car is rolled,
stones thrown as vulgar

words while drums beat
and an eagle flies
above the dust and trees,
above the graves and
a bridge blockaded.

Duncan Campbell Scott, Department of Indian Affairs & Poetry, is Refused a Passport to Paradise.

Once in an Indian Summer
out on an island
refuge between mountains
and invaded prairie,
winds blowing unshaken
with the early taste of winter,
far from the Fort,
far from the hunters that were,
a woman, part Iroquois,
part Cree, part white,
with her baby growing ill,
crouched through the first hours
of a great storm.
On the river, a vein
twisting through spent prairie,
running down to the Fort,
she fished with her flesh
on a rabbit-bone hook,
fished and caught only hunger.

For in the beginning was the Crown
and the Crown was with the poet
and the poet was the Crown; and all
things were remade through the Crown
for as long as the light shall shine
and the river flow.

At Fort Edmonton her father, Michael Calihoo, son of Iroquois Louis and Marie Patenaude, signs his *chi* without a *rho* on Treaty Six Adhesion, securing for his band thirty thousand acres reserved from Paradise.

Far from the Fort,
far from the hunters that were,

sun-stained vertebrae rose,
like coral reefs,
through worn and matted hides,
a barren archipelago scattered
by coyotes through the waves
of the dry prairie sea,
and where the woman fished,
shaken and determined, her baby
slept as one season's final flies
buzzed around another's last bison.

And in the beginning was the Indian Act
and the poet was in the Indian Act
and through the Deputy Superintendent all
things were remade and remade again while
the light fell, wolf-haunted and lonely,
and the river ran on under the ice.

Years and years after,
when she is old and withered,
when her grandson is dead from sniffing gasoline
because he wanted to stand in stifling winds and see
the promise of land regained, she sits
on her chair by the fire and refuses rest.
Child after child after child she has seen wither
under the rains and droughts of regulations,
seen them cry and die. Acre after acre
of Iroquois Louis' little Paradise she has seen washed
away by clerks and agents, wave after wave,
ink-black and remorseless.
Far from all forts, far from the hunters that were,
under wood-smoke hanging soft in the spruces,
she composes her shawl in state, folding
her vein-corded hands across her spent breasts
and the fire in the stove burns on the verge
of winter, in the last hours of the storm.

And in the beginning were words
and always the words became flesh
and fished among us as poets
sailing the sea, diving
through the burning darkness
for a hawk's bell of gold dust
or a handful of old mud.

Then all light is gathered up and hidden
by Weesageechak in his pack for another day.
There is born an anguish deeper than the sea
and a grief stronger than the storm.
And she closes her eyes and refuses rest.

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*: the 3rd Dive Completed

The prophet troubadour will not hang
his harp by northern Manitoba waters.

He picks a clear note and we hear
how he sings the land's song, its

gurgle and laughter as Meech Lake
is drained and our ships stranded.

Muskrat surfaces, almost drowned,
the scent of old mud breaking free

in bubbles giggling around him.
In his paws, clutched to his breast,

a piece of the old earth and
Weesageechak cries and laughs and makes

a new earth from the mud of paradise
and the sea recedes with his dancing.

5TH VOYAGE:

ENVOI

✡ *It is as the achievement of a flower,* **P***ure, white, waxlike and fragrant, that Columbus' infatuated course must be depicted, especially when compared with the acrid and poisonous apple which was later by him to be proved.*

*--William Carl***O***s Williams*

Dear Ferdinand and Ysabel:

*I have found such great irregularitie***S** *that I have come to the following conclusions concerning the world: that it is not round as they describe it, but the shape of a pear, on part of which is some***T***hing like a woman's nipple. I believe that the earthly paradise lies here, at the summit of what I have described as the stalk of a pear.*

*--***C***hristopher, from the 3rd Voyage*

The moving water will not show me my reflection.

*--"Sus***A***nna Moodie"*

*I have suddenly awoken in the midst of this d***R***eam but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I* have *to go on dreaming in order not to be destroyed.*

*--Frie***D***rich Nietzsche*

I began **S***ailing at an early age and haven't stopped yet.*

--Christopher, Spain, 1501 ✡

Columbus Café

1

Outside, across the street
where two elevators stand,
silhouettes bulwarked against the evening,
beyond the weed-choked railway lines,
runs the North Saskatchewan and a failing sun
that splashes orange pop and lime soda on the trees.

Inside, around oilcloth-covered
chrome tables and chairs on a lino floor
patterned with black and (once) yellow diamonds,
an ocean of red wallpaper, textured
like worn velvet, and littered
with your coat-of-arms and your signature,
XpoFERENS, reproduced mechanically
and, in places, peeling.
A family from Hong Kong
has bought this place to elude communists
from Cathay, as you and Ysabel sought a way
around Turks at Constantinople. I wonder
if they are as disappointed in their investment
as you were in yours, Columbus?

2

You elude me. Your face,
for instance. There is a picture
of you on the red wall between pop canisters
and the exit to the washrooms
(which is how I found you).
Painted-by-number by a bored child
or equally bored senior
during a nursing home crafts hour.
It's a copy of what is alleged to be you
looking out to us from a wall in a museum
in Como. The Italian painting is thought to be
an original work missing from another collection.
Did anyone catch you in your alleged lifetime?
Your friend, Las Casas, said your eyes were blue
like your ocean-sea. In Como, you look back at us
through brown lenses. But here, in this café,
the artist has given you one amber eye
and left the other green
and unfinished.

3

Consider your bones. Let's say
my knife is Hispaniola, my fork, Cuba,
and this napkin holder against the wall,
Spain.
        You die in 1506 and your son,
Diego, buries you (under this coffee cup)
in Valladolid. Then he changes his mind,
perhaps estimating you had sailed enough
the valleys of grief and despair. Again,
he buries you (watch my cup) in Seville.

But you will not rest in peace. Diego
himself crosses the deck in 1526 (this second cup)
and fifteen years later his widow, your
daughter-in-law, takes what remains (why?)
of the two of you on your fifth voyage.
You are left to become dust among the dust
of the cathedral in Santo Domingo (both cups
at my knife. Are you with me?)
                Then France takes
Hispaniola and Spain takes your bones (which cup
hides the pea?) to Havana's cathedral. Back
at Santo Domingo: when someone renovates
the cathedral they find...(what's under *this* cup?)
An engraved lead box! Now you are buried
in two places and Diego has disappeared.
Cuba becomes independent (no dead Spanish Admirals
please) so the bones that are you (or Diego?
Which cup do I move?) go back to Seville and
those that are Diego (or you) stay in Santo Domingo.

Until this year when, to mark the anniversary
of your glorious arrival, the *barrios* are bulldozed
to make room for your new home. Your bones (Seville
says they're Diego's), or Diego's (the regime
in Santo Domingo says they're yours) are removed
to the Caribbean's newest and brightest lighthouse.
Under which cup do I look to find you, *Christofer*
Phosphoros?
        Excuse me, the waitress is here
and I want some coffee. (Kenyan.)

4

I've looked for you
in your pictures and in the voyages
of history but this picture of you
on the way to the washroom in a café
between the Yellowhead Highway and
the North Saskatchewan, with its ambiguity
about your eyes, will serve as well as any.

Even your words have disappeared with the foam
from the waves you crossed. Your words defleshed
and reincarnated by those who sought, like artists,
to create you in the image they hoped to find.
Perhaps in the monastery at Valladolid, perhaps
in a corner of a forgotten archive, your logbooks
gather dust like your bones.
And if your ghost
delivered them to us, would we read them? You are
become what poets, whatever our disguises, have made
of you. Can you rest in peace, after all?

5

Inside, the cheap painting is better than
my hot-beef sandwich loaded with tacky gravy.
Outside, in the darkness of the prairie,
the last fragments of light burn on the river.
I leave you behind me now, Christopher,
to rest in the painting in the café.
Rolling down my window, I discover again
the scent of poplar and river water
and drive with an eye unfinished
and watching for a muskrat.

Notes

1. EMBARKATIONS

POSTCARDS:

Christopher Columbus, Jamaica 1503: "Letter Written by Christopher Columbus, Viceroy and Admiral of the Indies, to the Most Christian and Mighty King and Queen of Spain" (J.M. Cohen 304).

Marooned on Jamaica before the invention of the International Reply Coupon or Trans-Atlantic Cable, Columbus wrote this letter to kill time. Waiting a year for rescue, he and his crew survived on the hospitality of the indigenous people. Columbus was rescued from Daniel Defoe but the original Jamaicans disappeared before the next European expedition called in, perhaps as a result of diseases the Admiral & Co. left behind. Or perhaps, without necessarily anticipating Nietzsche (205), they became aeronauts of the spirit, brave birds flying further than discovered seas.

"Ports of Call": Canadi▶n Airlines International 249.

Christopher Columbus 15-16 Oct/92: Cohen 62 & 64.

Protestor, Edmonton 12 Oct/92: Engman.

Michael Klein, NASA: "New World search goes on."

How to use this book: These instructions, with some modification, are taken from the front of Smith's children's book *The First Voyage of Christopher Columbus 1492.*

The Invasion of Song: One source informing much of this poetic sequence is a Cree creation story. I have drawn on a version said to be have been recorded in English by another voyager, David Thompson, before the arrival of Christian missionaries (Clark 7-9).

The Suitcase as Tour Guide: A Discovered Poem: Poets sail in a variety of disguises. (Holland America Line, 1; Cohen, 290-1).

These Are My Ports of Call, Christopher: My approach to the Columbus material is biased. Here, I disclose some personal and literary experiences that have helped to

shape my view of the long poem, to give me some ideas for rewriting cultural "heroes," and that have otherwise formed the eyes through which I perceive the culture in which I live (cf. "Contact Lens," p. 31).

About Muskrat: To try to drive a creation myth in a postmodern vehicle, I imagine words lapping and crashing into each other like waves at sea. And I draw on a Cree story (Clark), giving the trickster-hero the spelling used by Tomson Highway (viii) which I understand may be pronounced something like "wee-sa-key-tchak."

On his third voyage, Columbus believed he had found Eden in the Caribbean. Perhaps, like modern tourists, he wanted to believe his travel agent's promotional literature. He was, after all, ill and exhausted and in need of a vacation. It also seemed to him a logical explanation for the behaviour of the mouth of Brazil's Orinoco River.

Columbus was not the only European to believe that somewhere on earth lay the Earthly Paradise from which Adam and Eve, naked as the Taino of Guanahaní, had been expelled. He was the only person, however, in this time of transition between medieval and modern worlds, to have claimed in writing that he had found it. And that it was pear-shaped.

What we now call "marigolds" are indigenous to the Americas but, like other namings, were called after a European plant. The word itself seems to be derived from "Mary's Gold" (Parsons 552).

I am grateful both to Nietzsche (210) and to Stephen Crane for the image of the modern condition as sailing in an open boat on an open sea. Whether we are Columbus or Weesageechak, or just ourselves, the events of modern history and literature have tossed us into a sea in open boats. We can sail, or dive.

Preparing the Last Day: Historical narratives and popular cultural retellings of the life and acts of Columbus make the "discovery" of the Americas very much a male saga. Here I imagine a woman on Guanahaní and see her as an independent person and possible spiritual leader prior to the Admiral's arrival. I imagine, too, that she may have been one of the seven Taino people Columbus forcibly took back with him (Cohen 58). In his life of his father, Fernando Colón mentions women captives on board (Cohen 80). About these people from Guanahaní, and those kidnapped from other islands, we hear nothing more after their presentation at the Spanish court.

Marigolds, manioc and tomatoes are indigenous to the

Americas and there is evidence the Maya used marigolds as an insect repellant, planting them around their corn fields and between the rows in their gardens, as organic gardeners have learned to do (Parsons 551).

At the beginning of November, the festival of "the days of the dead," *los días de los muertos*, is celebrated in Mexico. A Christian ceremonial now, the origins of this festival reach back to pre-Columbian times. Today, celebrations include a family gathering at the graves where marigolds are set out, and trails of marigold petals so the returning dead can find the family home with its prepared offerings of food and drink (Parsons 551).

Perhaps the Taino practised a radically different kind of horticulture from that of the Mayas. Perhaps they had no festival similar to *los días de los muertos*. But who can say? The Taino culture was virtually extinguished within eight years of Columbus' visit.

These Are Pictures of You, Christopher: I discovered the portrait in a magazine that throws the Admiral into his ocean-sea (Ellwood 4). The Latin professor, however, continues to navigate the seas of Academe. Throughout this sequence of poems, Christopher is addressed in the second person. The poet-narrator speaks, not with a dead person, but a living figure, i.e. a cultural myth or icon that still exerts influence. The historical Columbus is only a contributing force to the cultural Columbus, and its disguise.

The Iroquois Go West, Too, And Look For Paradise: "The Dream of 'Iroquois Louis'" (Hunter and Calihoo 75-80). The authors tell of the migration west of Calihoo's great-great-grandparents, Iroquois from the Caughnawaga reserve near Montréal, to Alberta. Alexander Mackenzie made his "voyage of discovery" in 1793. The Iroquois who came West and their decendants would become part of the Cree and lose their piece of Paradise in the process of European settlement and the formation of reserves.

2. ENCOUNTERS

POSTCARDS:

"Billy the Kid": Ondaatje 50.

Christopher, on the eve of sailing: Cohen 37-8; Landström 54-55.

Columbus fudged his daily entries in his sailing log so that his crew would not know just how far (distance equals terror) they had travelled from safe and known harbours. Here, and in other postcards, where I chart a long passage, or two, I condense the reporting (without ellipses to betray me) in order to make my own points.

Dear Noah: Genesis 7:2-3.

Christopher, in the Caribbean, 16 & 21 Oct/92: Cohen 64, 70-1; Landström 72-3. Here, as in other postcards from the Admiral, the text has undergone its own voyages. His log is quoted, summarized and digested by Las Casas and interpreted, along with other documents, by his son Fernando. These quixotic texts have, more recently, travelled through the translations of J.M. Cohen from Spanish to English. Cohen, whose name links him to the fourth ship in the harbour at Palos, has translated Cervantes and several Latin American writers. Columbus' log, digested by Las Casas, has also been translated into Swedish and English by Landström, a descendent of pre-Columbian trans-Atlantic travellers.

The incident related by Columbus here may be an explanation for the absence of snakes in contemporary advertisements for paradise.

Christopher, Hispaniola, 14 Oct/92: Cohen 58.

Baedeker's Guide to Paradise: After Columbus and his successors, massive numbers of Native people died from war, enslavement, and exposure to European diseases. Although standard texts minimize the genocide, some writers estimate that as many as 90% of a population of 80 million died between 1492 and 1660. But the Discover's voyage only ended as it had begun. The way was prepared for his journey by Ferdinand and Ysabel's final solution of Muslims and Jews.

The last Islamic state in Western Europe was annexed by the monarchs, and Spanish Jews ordered deported (unless they converted), before Columbus won royal support for his plans. Having eliminated the business and trading classes of their joint dominions, the sovereigns were receptive to anyone with ideas about new sources of wealth.

Columbus himself had had practice. In 1472, he helped the Genoese drive Muslim Turks from the Aegean island of Chios as Genoa sought to re-establish its trading position in the area (West and West 8-9). My principal source for documentary material in this poem is Landström (46-54). See also the argument for a link

between El Cid and Cortés in Butzer (583).

About the Queen of Sheba. Several queens appear in the saga of Columbus. Mary, and Ysabel, primarily. Opinion of the time was that the home of the Queen of Sheba who had visited Solomon with legendary wealth was not Arabia but the Indies.

The *Santa María* was shipwrecked on the coast of Hispaniola on Christmas Day, 1492, when Columbus left a young boy at the helm. The Taino helped Columbus and his crew to raise the first European settlement in the Americas from the wreckage. *La Navidad*, as the settlement was named, was later destroyed, probably in the course of Spanish violence against the Taino. What happened to *Santa María's* boy is unknown.

Christopher, This Is a Photograph of Me: My family came to Canada aboard the *Saxonia* in July 1959. We boarded the ship in Le Havre, France.

How the Sea Was Born Before Disney: The mythological background I have taken from Lunenfeld's selection of Stevens-Arroyo's interpretation of the records of Ramón Pané, a Catalan missionary who sailed with Columbus' second voyage. The Taino, it seems, regarded infant survivors of syphilis, born with scabby skin, as carrying the signs of spiritual power (Stevens-Arroyo 151).

On Board the *Santa María*, October 11-12, 1492: The night before making landfall, Columbus recorded seeing a strange light in the night and "a stick covered with barnacles" (Cohen 52) or "a small twig with roses on it" (Landström 67). Land was first sighted by Rodrigo de Triana. My navigation of other literary texts includes poems of Leonard Cohen and a nursery rhyme.

Otter Goes Bungee Jumping: I have built this poem from Clark's version of a Cree story (8) of creation and a primeval flood, and from tv reports of the incident.

Itiba's Valentine: On the 14th of February, 1493, Columbus and his crew ran into a storm while heading for Spain. So severe was it that Columbus, afraid others might lay claim to what he had done, wrote a brief letter to Ysabel and sealed it in a cask. He attached a note promising the finder a ransom from Ysabel. For details of the storm, of Columbus' letter, and of the vows his sailors made during the storm, I have drawn on chapters 37 and 38 of Fernando's life of his father (Cohen 100-105) and on Landström (100).

A relative of the *cacique* (the Spanish imagination of aboriginal leaders) was presented to Ferdinand and Ysabel (Landström 107) and assigned the king's own name. Perhaps it is not too far fetched to imagine that the *cacique,* Guacanagarí, was himself among those kidnapped by an Admiral wanting to show his patrons the best from the New World before he claimed his titles and rewards.

Hispaniola 1495: In order to pay his Spanish backers, Columbus had to return from his second voyage with more gold than the token amounts he had brought back on his first journey. He ordered every Taino on Hispaniola over the age of fourteen to fill a large hawking bell with gold dust and to trade the bell in for a brass or copper disc. The discs were to be worn around the neck and anyone without one was liable to punishment at the hands of Columbus' soldiers. Cf. Cohen (190) and Landström (133).

3. ESTIMATIONS

POSTCARDS:

actor Gérard Depardieu: August.

"Ports of Call": Canadian Airlines International 248.

Christopher, 15 Feb/93: Cohen 117.

1492: Conquest of Paradise: August; Horton.

Christopher, Christmas Day/92: (Landström 93)

"Billy the Kid": Ondaatje 17

a Knight of Columbus: Engman.

Copper Mines & Pop-ups: My introduction to Christopher Columbus came while I was living and attending elementary school in what was then called Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia (renamed after independence to Kitwe-Nkana, Zambia) where my father was an a District Officer for the British Colonial Service. Cecil Rhodes was a British explorer and adventurer who dreamed of carving a white, English, empire from South Africa to Egypt. Davey Crockett was an adventurer in another empire. This "king of the wild frontier," a song says, "killed him a b'ar

when he was only three." Only fragments of this song haunt my memory but when I called Texas for verification, my supervisor recognized the bear immediately and laughed, for which I'm grateful. My aunt, and uncle, continue to live in Wichita, Kansas.

Beaver Takes a Dive: The first recorded instance of Europeans shedding aboriginal blood in the New World was on the Samaná Peninsula (in what is now the Dominican Republic), January 12, 1493. It was Columbus' last stop before heading home.

The poisonous juice of the cassava provided the Taino with a means of suicide. The Spanish word, *desalojamiento*, "to be turned out of home," is apparently still used with horror by people living in the Samaná Peninsula (Reid 66).

On his first voyage, Columbus converted every object seen in the sea (weeds, birds, whales, etc.) into signs in order to convince his sceptical and near-mutinous crew that land was just over the next big wave. I don't know if, in fact, he saw the floating carcass of a drowned beaver but the near deaths of several youths at Davis Inlet, Labrador, was finally spotted by the federal government, the media, and the public, in February 1993 and recognized as a sign of something.

Contact Lens: In Ptolemy's projection of the world, the Indian Ocean was enclosed by a joined Africa and Asia. Sir John Mandeville, a pseudonym for Jean de Bourgogne, wrote what was perhaps the most popular, and imaginative, geography of the Middle Ages. In it he included a description of the Earthly Paradise, or Garden of Eden, from which Adam and Eve and all humanity were exiled (Landström 15). In the margin of his copy of Aneas Sylvius' *Historia Rerum*, Columbus noted that, in Galway Bay, he had seen "a man and a woman of outlandish appearance, in two drifting boats;" he decided they were from Cathay (Landström 26). In October 1492, Columbus also wrote, in his log, that the trees and plants of one island were "as green as in Andalusia in April" (Cohen 70).

Skinheads Kick Aztecs: Part 1 is written without apology to the QPP whose sensitivity is a matter of historical record. While the inventions of Leonard Cohen have influenced my imagination in this collection, my use of the Vulgar F here is derived from watching CBC television news reports during the summer of 1990.

In Part 4, I am thinking of other historical incidents involving, for example, the crew of the *Enola*

Gay who dropped "Little Boy" over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and the Edmonton Firefighters who resented the Mayor Jan Reimer's resentment of their anti-women t-shirts and their opposition to women serving as firefighters (*Edmonton Journal*. 5 February 1993. B1). A convention of the Aryan Nation, complete with a cross burning, took place near Provost, Alberta, in the summer of 1990, and should be thanked for generating province-wide debate about the relative rights of Aryans and human beings. The trade items are mentioned in Columbus' log for October 11-12, 1492 (Cohen 51-6). Columbus began his fifth voyage in 1541 when his daughter-in-law, Doña Maria de Colón y Toledo, took his bones, and those of his son, Don Diego, from Spain to Hispaniola. It is not known whether the Admiral kept any records during that crossing of the Atlantic but what is known is that within forty years, the original inhabitants of Guanahaní were extinct (Haskins 124-5; Reid 66).

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*: **Warm-ups:** Watching the diving competition (1992 Olympic Games), I was intrigued by how the camera angles turned superstar athletes into something even greater for, as they leapt from the diving tower, they appeared to jump over the buildings of Barcelona in the background. I chose this image as my lens as I return to my reading of the Cree creation story.

And Do You, Christopher, Take Liberty? My high school Latin teacher, Dr. Augustus Kuk, held degrees in Law and in Classics. Refused a position at Osgood Hall, he was told to teach high school because his English was inadequate. His classes offered studies in comparative grammar (Latin, English and Croatian), classical literature, contemporary politics (Trudeau, Vietnam, Tito), and sex ed. A great teacher and volleyball coach, it was from him I first caught a glimpse of a poetics in which disparate elements may be held together to deconstruct, or reconstruct each other. He is not to be confused with the Latin Professor who also appears in these poems and who remains anonymous because I have nothing further to say about him.

"Ameriflora '92" was planned as part of the quincentennial celebrations in Columbus, Ohio. Details of the wedding plans I have taken from Reid's article (57). In Canada we have had our own, 1⅛-centennial for which a new statue of the Queen riding her horse was unveiled in Ottawa. The Queen has had more than her share of the glare of tv lights. It's interesting to note the comment of Andius Varholides (1451-?): "Only they that set aside

the sentiments of their time and the common moral order may hope to receive their fourteen lines in a sonnet" (*Disputantes* II.7:14).

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*: the 1st Dive: In December, 1511, Father Antón Montesino preached two sermons in Santo Domingo, Hispaniola. They were the opening salvos in a campaign waged by Dominican missionaries on behalf of their aboriginal congregations and against colonial and commercial interests. Details of Montesino's first sermon are from an excerpt of Las Casas' *History of the Indies* (Lunenfeld 201-4).

4. RE-EMBARKATIONS

POSTCARDS:

Friedrich Nietzsche: Nietzsche 207.

Reuters: "Protests, celebrations mark Columbus landing."

Hedoninism II Jamaica: ALBA Tours 26.

Milton & Cheadle, 1863: Viscount Milton and W.B. Cheadle, *The North-West Passage by Land*. London: 1865. Excerpted in J.H.S. Reid, K. McNaught & H.S. Crowe, *A Source-Book of Canadian History*. Rev. ed. Toronto: Longmans, 1964. 166.

"Susanna Moodie": Atwood 60.

Friedrich Nietzsche: Nietzsche 205.

Barcelona 1992: The 1992 Olympic Games closed with a spectacular show of medieval-looking devils and helium-filled monsters rising, on cue, over the stands, with saturnalia-like dancing and extravagant fireworks. The Games were held in Barcelona where there is a statue of an earlier medalled-hero looking out over the Atlantic.

Onandaga Madonna, Reviewed: I have spliced two images here with one of D.C. Scott's sonnets (Scott 230.) One is a lingering image from the tv news reports during the "Oka" crisis of the summer of 1990, an image of a Mohawk clan mother on her quad, driving between the warriors and the soldiers, trying to defuse a tense confrontation. The other is a photograph of a young Mohawk woman leaning

against a tree (*The New Internationalist* 6). Scott's portrait is of a sensuous woman "of a weird and waning race" in a Canada where he wants Native people to be forced to assimilate; the woman has no future because the infant son she carries has no future as a warrior.

The Onondaga were the traditional "firekeepers" of the Iroquois confederation, its moderators and record keepers (Marsh 1319).

from *The Collected Works of Diver Muskrat*: the 2nd Dive: In 1986, The Reverend Dr. Robert Smith, Moderator of the United Church of Canada, crossed the parking lot behind the building in which the church's General Council was meeting, and delivered an apology passed by the Council that read:

> Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your elders an understanding of creation, and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, rich, and to be treasured.
>
> We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.
>
> We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ. (United Church of Canada, 85; cf. 230-44)

Shawnandithit is the name of the last surviving Beothuk. She died of tuberculosis in St. John (the Diver)'s, Newfoundland in 1829.

Here Is Another Picture of You, Christopher: I was thinking about a painting, reproduced in an article in a Swedish magazine (Westman). It shows Columbus, tired after his first voyage, waiting for an audience with the King of Portugal (Spain's competitor) who has "invited" Columbus to meet with him. I have reframed this painting, imagining Columbus waiting for an audience with Ysabel and Ferdinand on his return from his exhausting fourth journey. Ysabel will die before he can see her. His titles and share of profits from the new world, set out in a contract he made with the Sovereigns before his first voyage, are disputed, largely because of his mismanagement of the Spanish colony. Like Lear, he is a king and a fool, ill and tired of his storms.

In June 1503, Columbus and his crew, off course, ships leaking badly, were marooned of Jamaica. In a letter to Ferdinand and Ysabel, the Admiral wrote that "there is not a hair on my head that is not white, and my

body is sick and exhausted." Referring to his political and financial troubles, he added that "everything my brothers and I possessed has been taken from us and sold, even the very clothes on my back, without hearing or trial" (Landström 176). Captain Diego Méndez and another officer, Bartolomeo Fieschi, headed for Hispaniola in two canoes, a voyage that deserves a poem itself. Waiting for rescue, Columbus dealt with mutiny, with the heat and tedium affecting everyone, and with increasingly tense relations with the Native people. One of the miracles of this story is that Méndez and Fieschi made it, and although the colonial administration refused to help rescue the Admiral-Governor, they rented a ship. Columbus and his surviving crew, about a hundred wrecked bodies altogether, left Jamaica after 370 days and limped back to Spain, surviving two severe storms in which the mainmast and the foremast were broken.

The aboriginal people Columbus met, and who provided him with food and fresh water, no longer exist on Jamaica, their disappearance resulting, probably, as in other cases, from susceptibility to the European pathogens they hosted. Columbus returned to Spain in October, 1504. It was his last voyage while alive.

A wind-rose is the pattern of triangular petals drawn on a map to the indicate the direction of north.

Communion of the Silenced: When the people of Nicaragua were holding out against the repeated brutal attacks of the US financed contras, among the community-based churches of the rural and urban poor, a tradition developed in which, during the mass, the names of those who had disappeared or had been killed were called out aloud. The congregation would answer, *Presente!* Those who had been silenced were thus given back their voice in the memory of the community.

I don't know for sure that this happened among community-based churches in El Salvador, but I can imagine that it did, and I do so here because that nation, its body broken and blood shed in a long war by the military and elites against the poor, ironically bears the name of Christ. As did Guanahaní after Columbus had renamed it.

Thinking of Guanahaní as the embodiment of the encounter between Columbus and the people of the Caribbean in the past, and El Salvador as the embodiment of the continuity, and enlargement, of that encounter today, is one source of this poem.

Another is an awareness that has grown as I have been voyaging through my research, an awareness of people, particularly women, who are mentioned in only

passing, or between the lines, people whose own histories are not recounted. For example, of the Indians who were kidnapped and taken to Spain and presented to Ferdinand and Ysabel, some were baptized and some returned on Columbus' second voyage. What happened to them? Quite probably none of them lived long, but died of a disease they had never encountered before. I was curious, too, about the women in Columbus' life, about whom I heard or read little as a child and later as a history student. And about whom very little seems to be written at all. In the arguments for and against the celebrations of Columbus and the discovery/invasion of the Americas, then I want to add an element. Not to speak for them but to point to this continuing silencing force of a contemporary cultural figure.

Orden not only means "order" but is an acronym for *Organizacion Democratica Nacionalista*, established in El Salvador in the mid-1960's. It was a right-wing paramilitary organ of government repression and terror (North 70).

Duncan Campbell Scott, Department of Indian Affairs & Poetry, is Refused a Passport to Paradise: In part this poem is a reply to D.C. Scott's "The Forsaken" (Scott 28). The details of the circumstances and signing of the Adhesion to Treaty No. 6 I have taken from Chapter 14 of Hunter and Calihoo. Scott rose from serving as a clerk in the Department of Indian Affairs to being its Deputy Superintendent. His attitude towards Canadian Native people was complex. He did not believe traditional forms of aboriginal government and economic activity were possible anymore in an expanding and developing Canada. The only other options he saw were extermination, for which not a few Canadian voices were calling and which he opposed, or forcible integration. The central figure in "The Forsaken" is a native woman. Scott imagines that this woman, struggling against famine and the occupation of her land, quietly surrenders and, with the help of a Christian God, accepts "rest." That Scott was also a significant poet is an argument against the neutrality of art. Or, at least, it is a warning to writers of MA theses that the production of poetry is never apart from a wider practice. It can, for example, go together with bungee jumping and diving richly into our cultural wreckage.

5. ENVOI

POSTCARDS:

William Carlos Williams: Williams 7.

Christopher, from the 3rd voyage: Cohen 217-8, 221.

"Susanna Moodie": Atwood 11.

Friedrich Nietzsche: Nietzsche 206.

Christopher, Spain, 1501: Lunenfeld 81.

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(A long poem in which an immigrant and writer from Victorian Upper Canada is translated into a cultural figure for the 1970's.)

August, Marilyn. "An Explorer With Some Depth To Him." *Edmonton Journal*. 10 Oct. 1992: D1.
(Reviews the film, *1492: Conquest of Paradise* with attention to the lead actor's opinions of Columbus.)

Bible, The New Jerusalem. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985.

Bly, Robert. *Friends, You Drank Some Darkness: Three Swedish Poets*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975.
(Selected poems of Harry Martinson, Gunnar Ekelöf, and Tomas Tranströmer in Swedish with English translations by Robert Bly.)

Butzer, Karl W. "Judgement or Understanding? Reflections on 1492." *Queen's Quarterly: A Canadian Review* 99.3: 581-600.

(A conservative argument that the decimation of indigenous peoples in the Americas and the oppression of African slaves need to be understood, rather than judged, in the context of the new and energetic nations of the Western hemisphere. Columbus' arrival and what followed were the inevitable result of an encounter between two isolated continents.)

Canadi▶n Airlines International. *Canadi▶n Holidays: A World of Vacations*. Aug. 1992.

Canadi▶n Airlines International. "Ports of Call," *Canadi▶n Holidays: A World of Vacations*, 1992-93.

Clark, Ella Elizabeth. "The Beginning of the Cree World." *Indian Legends of Canada.* Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1960. 7-9.

(A re-re-telling of a Creation story.)

Cohen, J.M., ed. *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus.* Trans. and intro. J.M. Cohen. London: Penguin, 1969.

(Excerpts of Columbus's log-book and correspondence, of Fernando Colón's *Life*, and of narratives by others who sailed with Columbus, arranged to document each of Columbus' four voyages.)

Collis, J.S. *Christopher Columbus*. London: MacDonald & Jane's, 1976.

(A biography set in the context of the geographical knowledge and cosmological concepts of the Middle Ages and informed by the authors own travels across the Atlantic and around Jamaica. Appended is a discussion of "the Norse controversy.")

Colón, Fernando. *Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus By His Son Ferdinand*. Trans. and annotated. Benjamin Keen. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1950.

Columbus, Christopher. *The Log of Christopher Columbus*. Trans. and intro. Robert Fulson. Camden, Me.: International Marine Publishing Co., 1987.

Crane, Stephen. "The Open Boat." *Great Short Works of Stephen Crane*. 2nd. ed. Intro. J.B. Colvert. New York: Harper & Row, 1968. 277-303.

Diamond, Jared. "The Arrow of Disease." *Discover*. Oct. 1992: 64-73.
(Without the germs they brought with them, the European conquest of the Americans might well have been impossible.)

Ellwood, Wayne, ed. *New Internationalist*. Hidden History: Columbus and the Colonial Legacy. Dec. 1991.
(The entire issue of this monthly magazine is a collection of articles from a socialist perspective, denouncing Columbus and the European invasion of the Americas and exploring some aspects of present-day struggles by indigenous peoples.)

Engman, Kathleen. "Protesters, Celebrants Clash Over Legacy of Columbus." *Edmonton Journal*. 13 Oct. 1992: B2.
(News report of an Edmonton demonstration against the Quincentenary during a Columbus Day parade by the Knights of Columbus.)

Fernández-Armesto, Felipe. *Columbus On Himself*. London: Folio Society, 1992.
(A selection of surviving writings by Columbus, with some notations of his marginalia, arranged in chronological sequence.)

Fritz, Jean. *The Great Adventure of Christopher Columbus: A Pop-up Book*. Illus. Tomie de Paol. New York: Putnam & Grosset, 1992.

Fuentes, Carlos. *Christopher Unborn*. 1989. Trans. Alfred MacAdam and Carlos Fuentes. Vintage International Edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
(The narrator, born on the quincentenary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas, provides a satiric tour of life and history in an apocalyptic, contemporary Mexico.)

Gonzalez, Mike. "Decolonizing the Imagination: Who is this Columbus?" *Queen's Quarterly: A Canadian Review*. 99:3 562-580.
(A neo-Marxist critique arguing that the actions of Columbus, himself a product of his

society, was the beginning of a long history of human suffering in the Americas. The article links together the arrival of Columbus, the history of Latin America, and the foreign policies of Reagan and Bush.)

Highway, Tomson. Foreword. *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*. Geoffrey York. Toronto: Little Brown & Co. 1990. vii-ix.

(York's book explores the historical and contemporary conditions of Canadian Native people and of their recent political efforts to bring about change. Highway's Foreword endorses York's documentation of the events and conditions that have endured in "the seven lifetimes since Europeans first arrived" and warns that the Trickster spirit is alive, giving the hope of change.)

Haskins, Jim. *Christopher Columbus: Admiral of the Ocean Sea*. Scholastic Biographies. New York: Scholastic, 1990.

(A children's biography of Columbus portraying him as a courageous and able seaman while also making understated references to Native people and their suffering. He concludes with comments on the "Americanization" of Columbus.)

Holland America Line, *October 1992 - April 1993 Caribbean Cruises*

Horton, Marc. "Depardieu Rules These Waves: Review." *Edmonton Journal*. 10 Oct. 1992: D1.

How Columbus Discovered America. London: Bancroft & Co. n.d.

(My pop-up book--cf. "Copper Mines and Pop-ups." A children's book, it repeats the mistaken assumption that Columbus was alone in thinking the world was round and concludes the fictional, though charming, legend of the Admiral cracking the egg. No author, it seems, wanted to take credit for this book in its publication.)

Hunter, Robert and Robert Calihoo. *Occupied Canada: A Young White Man Discovers His Unsuspected Past*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991.

(Robert Royer/Calihoo, was raised in a white suburb of Edmonton by his grandmother. When she died he went to live with his father, Albert Calihoo on a reserve outside Edmonton. His anger led him first into prison and, eventually into working in of the Department of Indian Affairs. In the process, as he

uncovered the history of his Iroquois forbears and the extinction of their small reserve in Alberta.)

Kamboureli, Smaro. *On the Edge of Genre: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem*. Theory/Culture Series. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

(A critical study of the Canadian long poem in a historical context, with attention to the work of several major, contemporary Canadian poets and consideration of the relationship of the long poem to epic, lyric and documentary genres.)

Kiernan, V.G. "What Europe Owes to Columbus." *Queen's Quarterly: A Canadian Review*. 99:3 522-541.

(The Encounter resulted, from its beginning, in an American influence on European history. New sources of wealth, missionary competition, American agricultural products, words from indigenous languages, and the potential for immigration affected European economies, trade, religion and social life. As today's capitalist, private-property based world is in crisis, it may be time to re-learn old lessons from the New World.)

Landström, Björn. *Columbus: The story of Don Cristóbal Colón*. New York: MacMillan, 1967.

(A detailed presentation of European concepts of the world and its geography in Columbus' day, and of the skills and instruments of sailing and navigation. Most of the book follows each of Columbus' voyages interspersing historical narrative with large extracts of Columbus' log or letters. Detailed illustrations by the author.)

Livesay, Dorothy. "The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre." 1969. *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*. Ed. and intro. Eli Mandel. Patterns of Literary Criticism 9. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971. 267-282.

(The documentary poem, in which lyrical, narrative and didactic elements are held together, is a distinctly Canadian genre.)

Lunenfeld, Marvin, ed. *1492 Discovery Invasion Encounter: Sources and Interpretation*. Sources in Modern History Series. Lexington, Mass.: 1991.

(An anthology of excerpts in translation from a variety of European and indigenous American sources. The collection offers glimpses into the mindset of

15th and 16th-century Europeans and into how Europeans and Amerindians saw each other.)

MacNiece, Louis. *Christopher Columbus*: A Radio Play. London: Faber & Faber, 1963.
(Celebrates the discovery of America by a great sailor who had his human faults.)

Maestro, Betsy and Guilio. *The Discovery of the Americas*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1991.
(Columbus was not the first to arrive in the New World. Presents, for young readers, information about the arrival of the first Americans and of early voyages, historical and legendary, from both Europe and Asia.)

"New World search goes on." *Edmonton Journal*. 11 Oct. 1992: A5.
(News report on NASA's search for signs of intelligent life in the universes.)

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *A Nietzsche Reader*. Penguin Classics. Trans. and intro. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1977.
(Excerpts of the philospher's writings arranged thematically.)

North, Liisa. *Bitter Grounds: Roots of Revolt in El Salvador*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1981.
(Critical assessment of the historical and social causes of the war in El Salvador and of the US role.)

O'Gorman, Edmundo. *The Invention of America: An inquiry into the historical nature of the New World and the meaning of its history.* Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1961.
(The concept of "America" and Western culture emerge as historical inventions rather than as happenings. O'Gorman critiques the idea that America was "discovered" in the context of the cultural history of Europe.)

Ondaatje, Michael. *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems*. Toronto: Anansi, 1970.
(Poetic rewriting of an anti-hero.)

Paolucci, Anne and Henry Paolucci, eds. *Columbus*. Council on National Literatures World Report.

Whitestone, NY: Griffon House, 1989.
(Collected essays on philology and the Columbus story, Columbus in a historical perspective, Italian Renaissance literary responses to the New World, the Spanish "Exodus" of 1492, and public monuments to Columbus.)

Paolucci, Anne and Henry Paolucci, eds. *Columbus: Modern Views of Columbus and His Time. Essays, Poems, Reprints*. Council on National Literatures World Report. Whitestone, NY: Griffon House, 1990.

Parsons, James J. "Southern Blooms: Latin America and the World of Flowers." *Queen's Quarterly: A Canadian Review* 99.3: 542-561.
(An introduction to some of the wide variety of indigenous plants Europeans encountered on their arrival in the Americas.)

Phillips, Wm. D. and Carla R. *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
(An assessment of Columbus and the effects of his achievements in the light both of pre-Columbian relations and trade between Europe and Asia and of the Spanish conquest and the development of colonial empires in the post-Columbian world.)

Pratt, E.J. "The Titanic." *Complete Poems*. 2 vols. Ed. Sandra Djwa and R.G. Moyles. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989. 1:302-38.
(A long narrative poem woven from a variety of elements including desciption and dialogue.)

"Protests, celebrations mark Columbus landing." *Edmonton Journal*. 13 Oct. 1992: A5

Reid, Alastair. "Reflections: Waiting for Columbus." *New Yorker*. 24 Feb. 1992: 57-75.
(In the light of preparations for the Quincentenary celebrations, the author reflects on his encounters with people and with history while living for a time in the Samaná Peninsula in the Dominican Republic.)

Rosenthal, M.L. and Sally M. Gall. *The Modern Poetic Sequence: The Genius of Modern Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

(A critical study of the long poem, or poem sequence, from Whitman and Dickinson to Pound, Yeats and William Carlos Williams, this work argues that the poetic sequence is a modern genre utilizing disparate and opposing elements.)

Sale, Kirkpatrick. *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy*. New York: Alfred A. Knofp, 1990.

(Columbus is the figure with whom the Modern Age begins. His achievements enabled the transplanting of European culture to the Americas and, based on the wealth exploited from the New World, the transformation of Europe into our contemporary, and expanding, Western culture. The Conquest of Paradise was also a conquest of nature, the consequences of which now threaten destruction unless life in the Americas is regenerated with the wisdom of the first Americans.)

Scott, Duncan Campbell. *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1926.

Smith, Barry. *The First Voyage of Christopher Columbus 1492*. London: Viking, 1992.

(A children's book presenting the life of Columbus and information about 15th-century sailing through the perspective of a sailor from Palos who needed a job. Without comment on the aboriginal perspectives or experiences but containing an "exciting fold-out MAP.")

Stevens-Arroyo, A.M. *Cave of the Jaguar: The Mythological World of the Tainos*. Select. and ed. Martin Lunenfeld. *1492 Discovery Invasion Encounter: Sources and Interpretations*. Sources in Modern History Series. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1991, 144-151.

(Stevens-Arroyo has translated Taino poetry recorded by Friar Ramón Pané who sailed with Columbus on the second voyage and also Pané's theological commentaries.)

Tranströmer, Tomas. "Östersjöar" ("Baltics.") 1974. *Dikter*. Stockholm: MånPocket (Bonniers), 1984. 119-32.

(A long poem in which the narrator's journey on Baltic Sea becomes a metaphor for the passing of human life and of a history that includes the Middle Ages, the First World War and the narrator's

maternal grandparents.)

United Church of Canada. *The Record of Proceedings of the 31st General Council 1986*. Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1986.

Viola, Herman J. and Carolyn Margolis, eds. *Seeds of Change: Five Hundred Years Since Columbus*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

(Essays on the "three faces of Eden," on the decline of indigenous American cultures, the transformation of aboriginal agriculture into a colonial economy, and the creation of an Hispanic American heritage.)

West, Delno C. and Jean M. West. *Christopher Columbus: The Great Adventure and How We Know About It*. New York: Atheneum, 1991.

(A picture book, giving attention not only to Columbus's voyages but to his historical context and to the process of historical investigation.)

Westman, Lars. "Xpo FERENS Columbus: Västerut--Rakt in i Historien." *Vi*. December 1991: 14-25.

(This article in a Swedish weekly magazine, in its cursory review of Columbus' voyages and of some of the controversy surrounding the Quincentennial, stirred my interest and led me to write some poetry in response. It also introduced me to Landström's text and illustrations.)

Williams, William Carlos. *In the American Grain*. Intro. Horace Gregory. New York: New Directions, 1956.

(Williams first chapters, including "The Discovery of the Indies: Christopher Columbus" mix quotations from original documents, such as Columbus' log-book, with the poet's own historical perceptions.)

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